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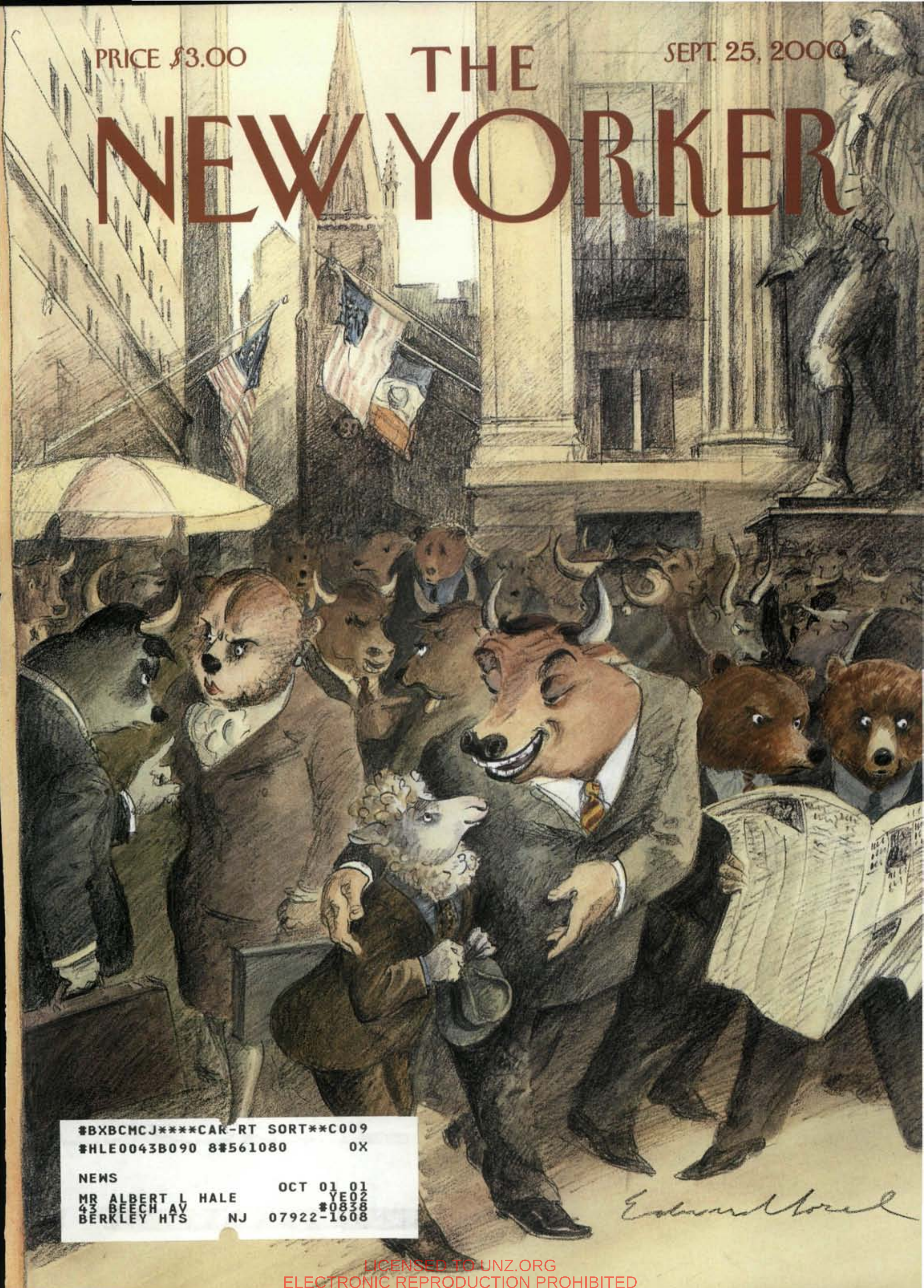
THE NEW YORKER

SEPT. 25, 2000



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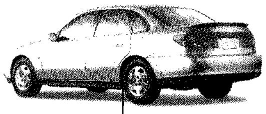

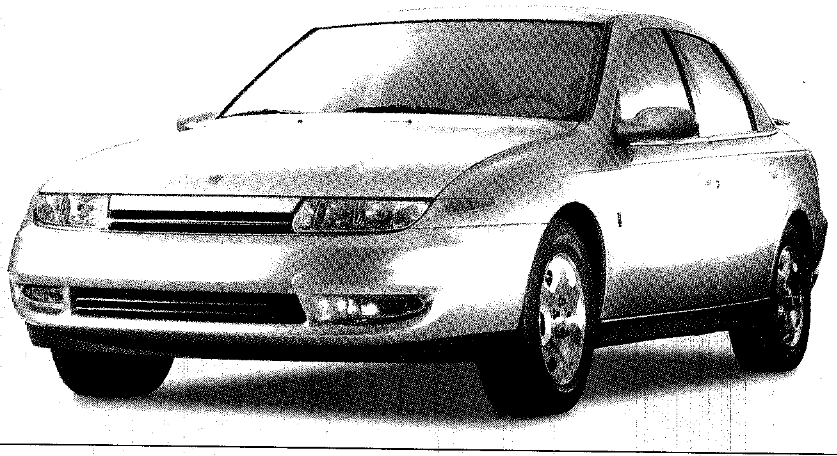

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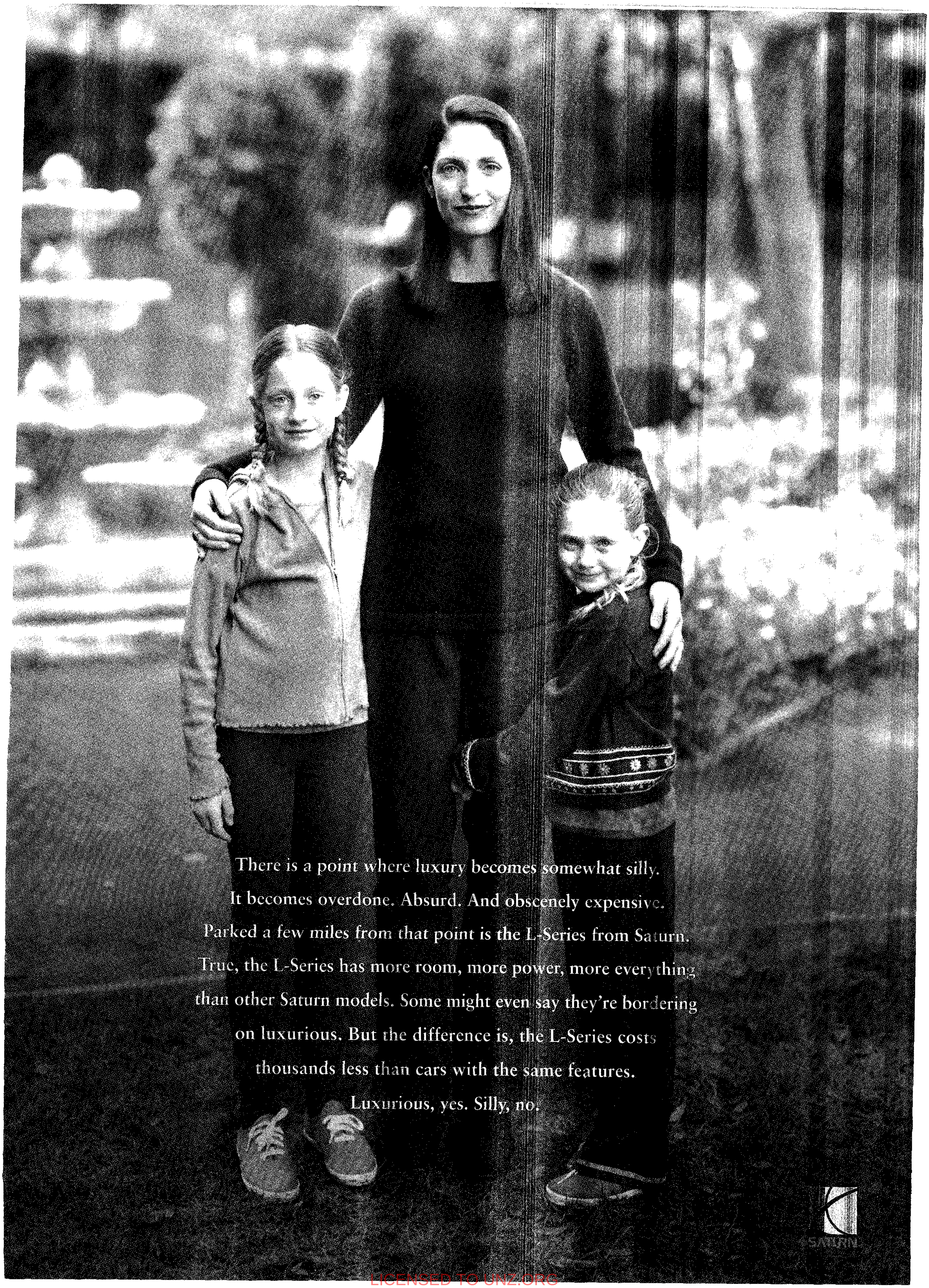

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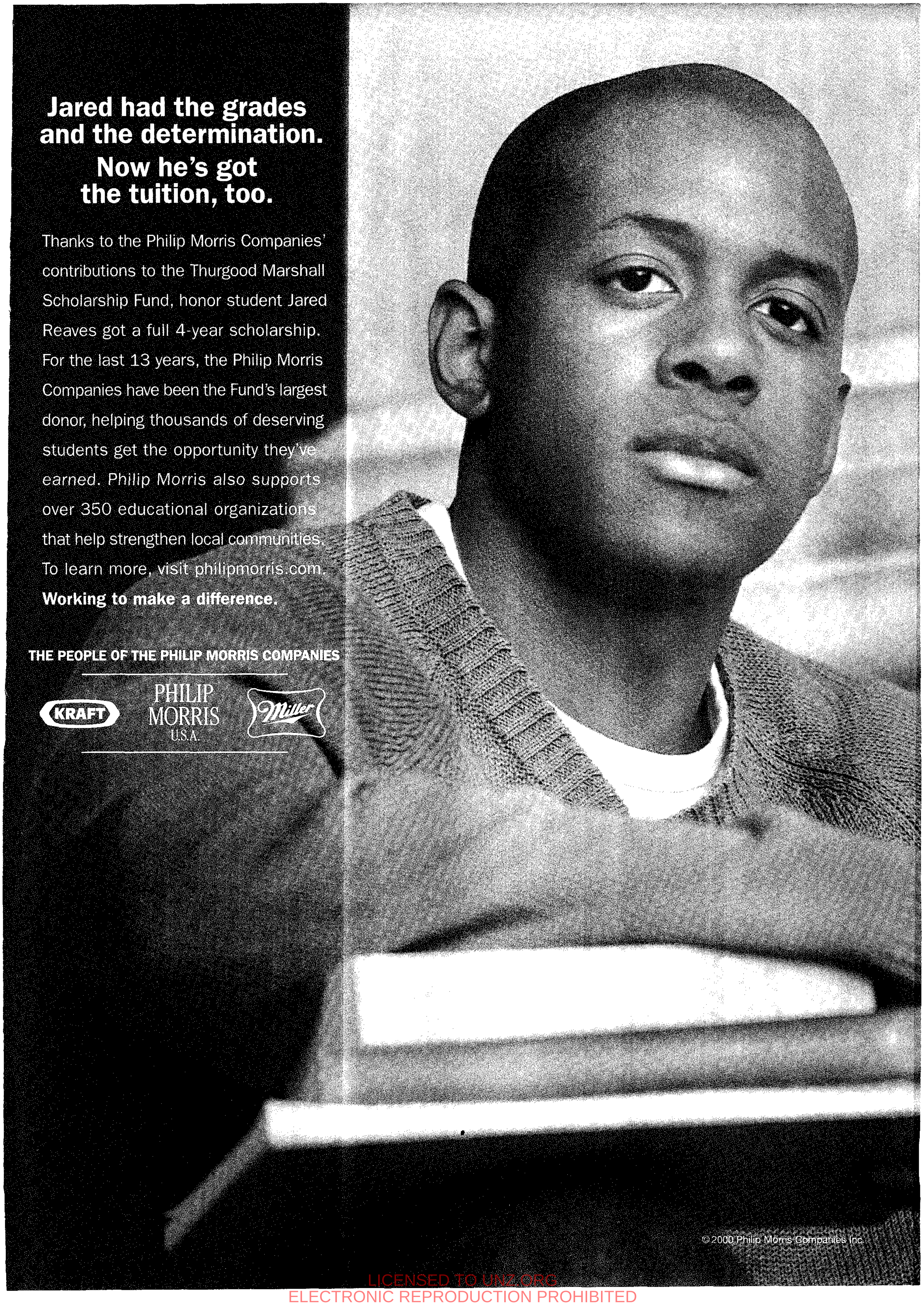

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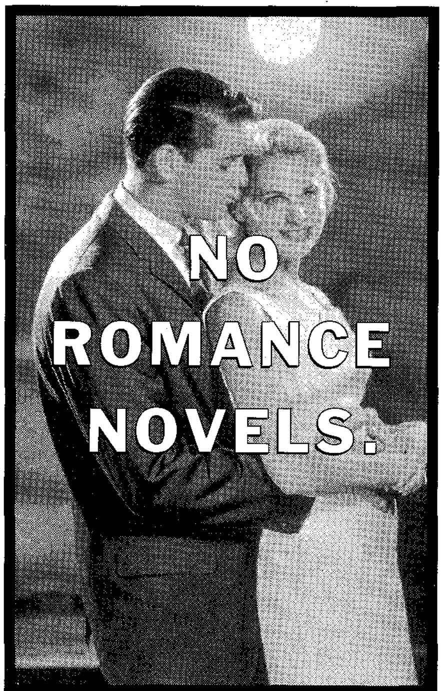

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CONTRIBUTORS

Philip Gourevitch ("Forsaken," p. 52) is the author of "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda."

Mark Singer ("God and Football," p. 38) started writing for the magazine in 1974. This week he revives Calvin Trillin's column, U.S. Journal, which began running in 1967.

Charles Wright (Poem, p. 87) is the author of fifteen books of poetry, including "Black Zodiac," which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1998.

Lydia Davis (Fiction, p. 76) has published two collections of short fiction and a novel, "The End of the Story."

Elizabeth Kolbert ("Common Man," p. 68) is a staff writer.

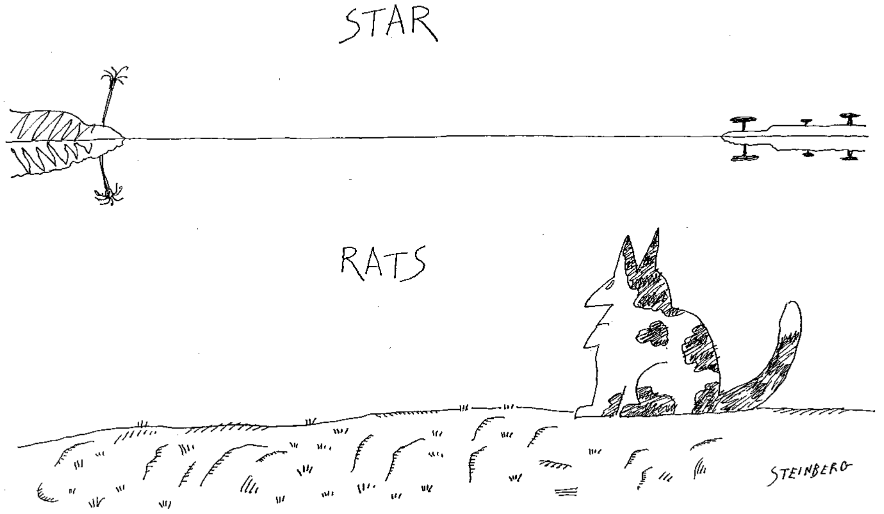
Roger Angell (Takes, p. 73) has been a fiction editor at the magazine since 1956 and a contributor since 1944. He is working on a biography of David Cone.

John Updike (A Critic at Large, p. 84) is the author of fifty-one books. "Licks of Love," a collection of stories, will appear in November.

Nicholas Lemann (Books, p. 89) is a staff writer. His latest book is "The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy."

Robert Grossman (The Back Page, p. 102) is an illustrator and cartoonist. His work first appeared in the magazine in 1962.

Alex Kotlowitz ("I Got the Sheriff," p. 44) is the author of "There Are No Children Here" and "The Other Side of the River." ♦



SAUL STEINBERG, 10/3/77

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THE MAIL

THE YOUNG PRETENDERS

In his review of "The Original Kings of Comedy" (The Current Cinema, September 4th), David Denby echoes the comedians' mocking treatment of rap music. The Kings' attitude of dismissiveness betrays how out of touch (albeit funny) these over-forty types are. Hip-hop artists like Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre are both talented and in tune with their times. One hopes that the current praise for the Kings will not be used as a vehicle for a contrast between the "good" blacks and the young troublemakers.
Wayne Johnson
Seattle, Wash.

BAD MAN OF TENNIS

John McEnroe's tennis commentary may, as Calvin Tomkins writes, be "widely admired," but it is still just a continuation of the blaring egocentricity that marred his court behavior ("The Tennis Artist," September 4th). He disparages women and little-known players who have fought their way up. He neglects the game in favor of gossip about tennis and himself. Anyone who has seen and heard Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova knows that there are former pros capable of providing excellent commentary—quiet, precise, and respectful of all players—and that McEnroe is not one of them.
William Barker
East Orleans, Mass.

Two things about John McEnroe have always impressed me: his raw tennis ability and his long relationship with Arthur Ashe, with whom he proudly represented the United States in Davis Cup play. So I was astonished, last year, to hear McEnroe root for the Swiss Martina Hingis against our own Serena Williams. His comment to Tomkins that "any good male college player" or man on the senior tour could beat either Serena or her sister Venus went even further, betraying a resentment of the entire Williams family—perhaps because they express their opinions as strongly as he always has. I'm glad that the sisters have resisted McEnroe's efforts to lure them into a grudge match; he should first play Hingis, his favorite.
James E. Teele
Ipswich, Mass.

JEWS DIVIDED

Daphne Merkin speaks of the Jewish people as a "once intact community," implying that, until recently, Judaism was monolithic ("Trouble in the Tribe," September 11th). Jews started arguing with each other over their faith about five minutes after they left Egypt. The tension between those at different points on the continuum of observancy is one of the things that have kept Judaism vital. Many Jews today, like those former slaves who turned to a single deity thousands of years ago, realize that, far from consisting only of "the sober letter or the confining spirit of the law," the guidance that Judaism gives on everyday ethical dilemmas trains us to be ready for our own moment of truth.
Hiram Sachs
Salem, Oreg.

I have always envied Catholicism its lapsed Catholics, especially that compelling class of American writers who, thanks to their schools and the nuns they despised and loved, were well informed about the religion they never entirely left behind. Until I read Merkin's article, I thought that there were no similarly lapsed Jews among contemporary American writers. Either they had nothing to lapse from, having no solid Jewish education, or they hadn't really lapsed. Because Merkin is a lapsed Jew who has retained a strong sense of her religious identity, she deserves some of the credit given to Joseph Lieberman for bringing Judaism into the American mainstream.
Joseph Lowin
Monsey, N.Y.

•

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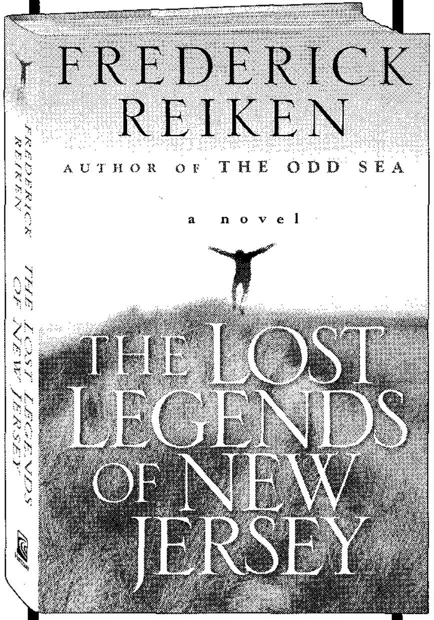
"Beautiful"*



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"Engrossing... Reiken deftly explores the mysteries of love and loss."
—*Time*

"Wondrously appealing... A beautifully told story of bad choices, good intentions and the price of intimacy."
—*Chicago Tribune*

"Affectionate but tough-minded.... [Reiken] captures the poetry of the New Jersey condition, circa 1980, with a rare precision."
—*The New York Times Book Review*

"A wonderful, wonderful book."
—**The Philadelphia Inquirer*

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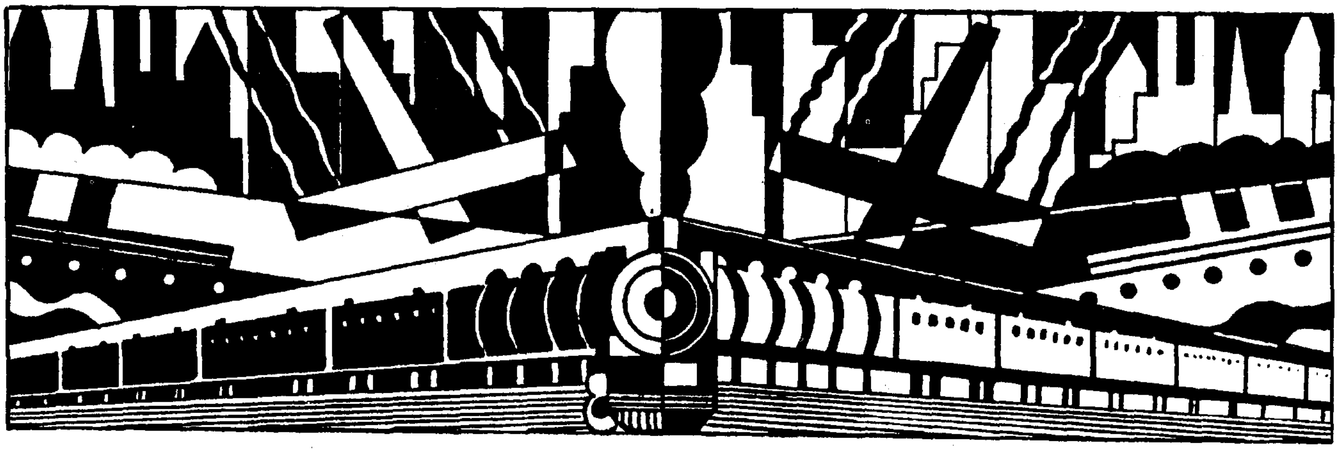

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
The latest edition of Gerard Alessandrini's ongoing musical satire of the players and the plays along the Great White Way. In previews. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

THE IN-GATHERING
An emancipated slave travels to New Orleans after the Civil War to search for his wife, in a new musical by John Henry Redwood (book) and Daryl Waters (music). Ann Duquesnay and Kimberly Jajuane are in the cast. Preview on Sept. 20. Opens Sept. 21 at 8 and runs through Oct. 1. (Duke Theatre, 229 W. 42nd St. 398-2666.)

JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK
Sean O'Casey's 1924 comitragedy, in a Roundabout Theatre production. John Crowley is the director. Previews begin Sept. 22. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

LIFEGAME
A show by the British troupe Improbable Theatre, in which a different onstage guest's life story becomes the basis of the drama each night. In previews. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

STRANGER
Kyra Sedgwick and David Strathairn lead the cast of Craig Lucas's new play, about a man with a secret. Mark Brokaw is the director. Previews begin Sept. 26. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303.)

TALLULAH HALLELUJAH!
Tovah Feldshuh portrays the screen star Tallulah Bankhead, in a musical portrait set at a 1956 U.S.O. show. In previews. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AIDA
Disney's musical—five years in the making and a product of Pharaonic expense—is, if not perfect, a lively, polished entertainment with bursts of joyful flamboyance worthy of its composer, Elton John. The two female leads—Heather Headley, as Aida, and Sherie René Scott, as Amneris—shine in their different ways, and Bob Crowley's brilliant sets give the show both visual dazzle and emotional resonance. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/10/00.) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			20	21	22	23
24	25	26				

AND GOD CREATED GREAT WHALES
An encore engagement of Rinde Eckert's musical-theatre work, in which a composer with a degenerative disease struggles to finish an opera based on "Moby Dick." (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

BERLIN TO BROADWAY WITH KURT WEILL
A revue celebrating the composer's career, starring Lorinda Lisitza, Bjørn Olsson, Michael Winther, and Veronica Mittenzwei. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 239-6200.)

BLITHE SPIRIT
Noel Coward's 1941 comedy is the Pearl Theatre Company's season opener. (80 St. Mark's Pl. 598-9802.)

BOXING 2000
From Richard Maxwell, a fable about two half-brothers training for the ring. (Present Company Theatorium, 196 Stanton St. 420-8877. Closes Sept. 30.)

COPENHAGEN
Michael Frayn's play speculates on the controversial 1941 reunion of the two giants of quantum mechanics—the physicists Niels Bohr (Philip Bosco) and Werner Heisenberg (Michael Cumpsty). It is so meticulous, so admirable, and so grave that you want to tousle its well-kempt appearance and tell it to lighten up. Nevertheless, the director, Michael Blakemore, manages to make dynamic and suggestive an evening that consists of three actors (Blair Brown plays Margrethe Bohr) and three chairs. (4/24 & 5/1/00) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE CRADLE WILL ROCK
The Jean Cocteau Rep opens the season with Marc Blitzstein's 1937 labor-movement musical. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

THE CRUMPLE ZONE
A dark comedy by Buddy Thomas, set during a Christmas gathering of five gay men. (Rattlestick Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl. 206-1515.)

DON JUAN IN HELL
Donal Donnelly, Celeste Holm, James A. Stephens, and Fritz Weaver give a dramatic reading of the third-act dream scene from Shaw's "Man and Superman," under the direction of Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Oct. 8.)

GODSPELL
An updated version of the 1971 rock musical, with music and new lyrics by Stephen Schwartz. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 239-6200. Closes Oct. 7.)

GORE VIDAL'S THE BEST MAN
A revival of Vidal's 1960 political drama, starring Charles Durning, Spalding Gray, Chris Noth, Elizabeth Ashley, Christine Ebersole, and Michael Learned, among others. Directed by Ethan McSweeny. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

THE IMMIGRANT
A musical version of Mark Harelik's 1985 play, about a Russian Jewish immigrant who is befriended by a Baptist couple in a small Texas town. With lyrics by Sarah Knapp and music by Steven M. Alper. Randal Myler is the director. (CAP21 Theatre, 15 W. 28th St. 279-4200. Closes Oct. 8.)

IMPERFECT CHEMISTRY
A musical comedy by Albert M. Tapper and James Racheff, about two geneticists at a philanthropic laboratory who are seduced into finding a cure for baldness. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES
A revue tracing the history of the musical form, which had its New York première at the New Victory Theatre in 1999. With Charles Bevel, Carter Calvert, Debra Laws, Gregory Porter, Cheryl Alexander, and Michael Mandell. Jim Ehinger is the musical director. (B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, 243 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE JERUSALEM SYNDROME
The comic Marc Maron is fully aware of all the dubious idols that have replaced God in our culture, and he pulls no punches in pointing them out. In his one-man show, a heartbreakingly funny, faux-naïf travelogue, he leads the audience into purgatory and back, as he tries to find some kind of spiritual resonance in Hollywood fame, cigarettes, the Wiz, Coke (and coke), and Israel, where, he claims, he just wasn't "Jewy" enough to achieve the transcendence the land offers to the less materialistic. Maron may not be the Messiah, but he's definitely the guy to tell you where you won't find Him. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

JITNEY
August Wilson's play is set in a car-service station in 1977, in a part of Pittsburgh which is being demolished faster than it's being renovated. In this atmosphere of decay, Wilson's characters struggle with themselves and with each other to find some hope, and some peace, amidst the rubble. The cast of nine wonderful actors hit perfect notes of collision and cohesion, and turn what might otherwise be a draggy experience (the play runs to

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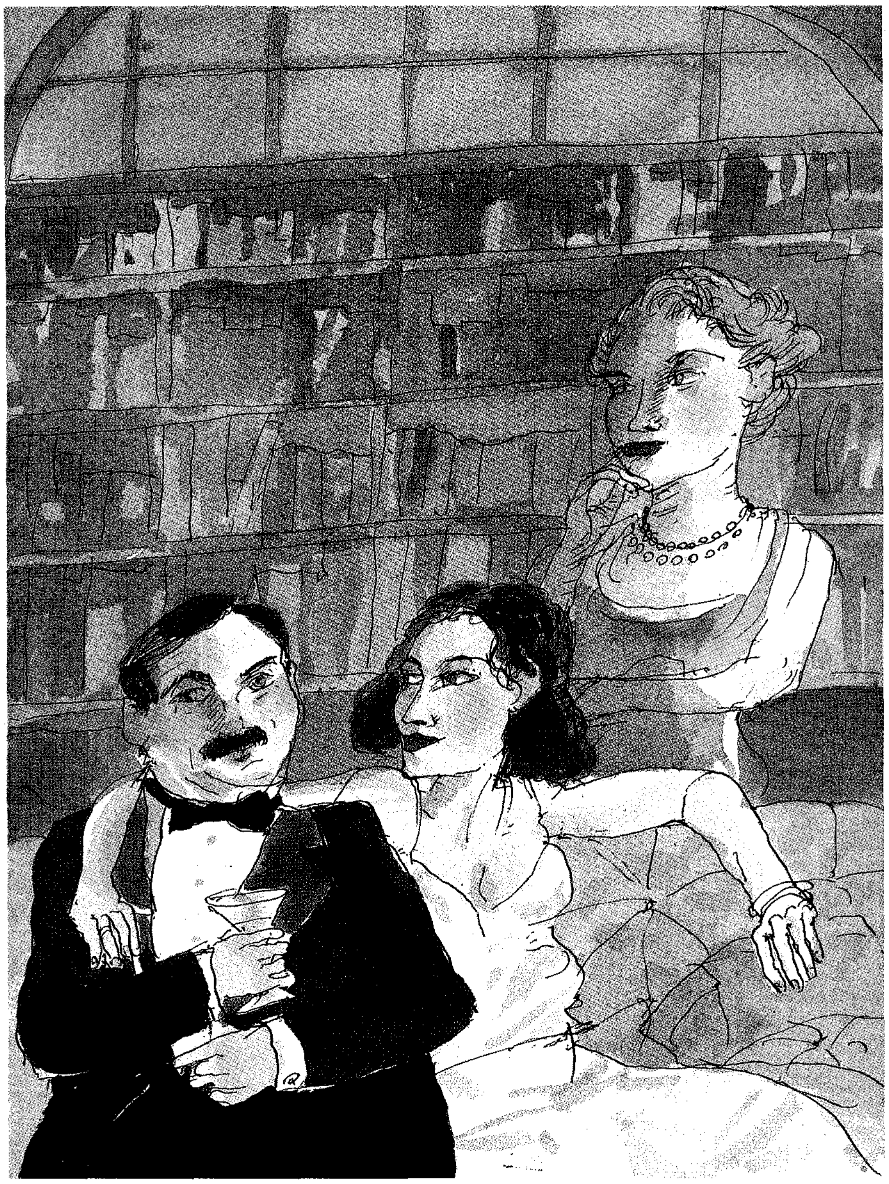

Doug Stender, Hope Chernov, and Joanne Camp, in "Blithe Spirit," at the Pearl.

nearly three hours) into a riveting and moving one. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

LYPSINKA! THE BOXED SET
The star (a.k.a. John Epperson) makes her first concert appearance in seven years. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 206-1515. Closes Sept. 24.)

THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER
The Roundabout's revival of Kaufman and Hart's evergreen 1939 satire of Hollywood and of New York literary society is pure gold. Nathan Lane is back onstage where he belongs, playing Sheridan Whiteside, a noxiously pompous critic and radio personality who commandeers the bewildered family and staff of a staid Ohio household—where he slipped on ice after a dinner in his honor and ended up in a wheelchair. The play itself is a model of comic construction and is chock-full of vintage stage business, which the excellent cast executes with gleeful nineteen-forties snap. Jean Smart, Byron Jennings, and Lewis J. Stadlen, as three famous personalities who pop in for a visit, are all brilliant. Jerry Zaks is the director. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes Oct. 15.)

MIDDLE FINGER
Han Ong's new play traces the interconnected lives of two Filipino-Americans who attend the same Catholic boys' school in Chicago. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 581-8896. Closes Oct. 1.)

THE MUSIC MAN
A delightful revival of Meredith Willson's 1957 musical, directed by Susan Stroman and starring Craig Bierko, who is making his Broadway début in the role of Professor Harold Hill. The show hits us with the simplicity and seamlessness of a perfect fairy tale, and it puts music in its proper place—right up there with all the other miracles of life. (5/22/00) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

RICHARD II / CORIOLANUS
Ralph Fiennes and Linus Roache lead the casts in repertory performances of Shakespeare's plays, staged by London's Almeida Theatre Company. "Richard II" runs through Oct. 1. "Coriolanus" runs through Sept. 30. (9/18/00) (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

RIVERDANCE
The Irish troupe of dancers, singers, and musicians. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SIGNATURE THEATRE COMPANY
This year the company presents a season of new plays by various authors, beginning with "A Lesson Before Dying," Romulus Linney's stage adaptation of the novel by Ernest J. Gaines. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

SOUL OF AN INTRUDER
A psychological thriller by Steve Braunstein, about a triangle between a woman and two of her former lovers, who come back into her life at the same time. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 279-4200. Closes Sept. 30.)

STREET OF BLOOD
From the Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes, a "prairie gothic epic" that examines bloodlust, religion, AIDS, and celebrity worship, among other topics. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

THE SYRINGA TREE
A one-woman play written and performed by Pamela Gien, about two families—one black, one white—sharing a household in nineteen-sixties South Africa. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

WELCOME TO OUR CITY
Thomas Wolfe's rarely produced, controversial play about race (it originally called for white actors in blackface) was written in 1923, while he was a student at Harvard. (Mint Theatre, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231. Closes Oct. 8.)

WHERE EVERYTHING IS EVERYTHING
Daisy Eagan and Paul Sparks portray a shy graphic designer and a brash financial consultant, in a romance by Stephen Spoonamore. (New York Performance Works, 128 Chambers St. 539-8892.)

WHY WE DON'T BOMB THE AMISH
A one-woman comedy skewering cultural hypocrisies, written and performed by Casey Fraser, and accompanied by a band performing jazz, blues, funk, and hard-core punk. (Gershwin Hotel, 7 E. 27th St. 279-4200.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

THE COUNTESS
Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.

DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.

DIRTY BLONDE
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

THE FANTASTICKS
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY
Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.

FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

FULLY COMMITTED
Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

JEKYLL & HYDE
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

KISS ME, KATE
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477.

SWING!
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

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St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

DANCE

"THE MUKISHI"
Batoto Yetu, the Harlem-based troupe of young dancers trained in traditional African dance, presents the story of a boy's spiritual journey, undertaken to protect his town. The full-length work, based on beliefs of the Luba tribe in Angola, was directed and choreographed by Júlio Leitão. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Sept. 22 at 7, Sept. 23 at 2 and 7, and Sept. 24 at noon and 5.)

REGGIE WILSON/FIST & HEEL PERFORMANCE GROUP
The nine-member troupe performs "Wangena—the Birthday Concerts," created by the choreographer to celebrate his thirty-third birthday; "Rise, Sally, Rise," a trio for three women; "Vanity-starts@Home," a solo for Wilson; "Jumpin' the Broom"; and other works. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Sept. 20-23 at 8. Through Sept. 30.)

"SLAY THE DRAGON"
The choreographer Jody Oberfelder puts her six dancers through an acrobatic series of tests in a work about facing down fear. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 226-2407. Sept. 21-23 at 8. Through Oct. 7.)

IN THE COMPANY OF MEN 2000
The fifth annual concert featuring works commissioned for this engagement and choreographed by male choreographers. This year's men are the former Paul Taylor dancer Andrew Asnes, the current David Parsons dancer Robert Battle, Matt Jensen, Nicholas Leichter, Gabriel Masson, Lê Minh Tâm, Nathan Trice, and Charles Wright. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 625-8369. Sept. 21-23 at 8 and Sept. 24 at 6.)

"BE GOOD"
The choreographer Henning Rübsam and his company, Sensedance, perform repertory works and two premières: "Voices of Spring," which dancers have learned in separate rehearsals (the opening-night show will be the first group performance), and the title work, set to a series of tunes by Jerome Kern, Duke Ellington, and George Gershwin. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Sept. 21-24 at 8:30.)

"MUSIC AND DANCE OF RAJASTHAN"
Musafir, an eleven-member ensemble of musicians and dancers from the Thar Desert, presents original works in a variety of subcontinental styles, including *qawwali,* a kind of Muslim devotional music, and traditional *sayari sapera,* or snake-charming dances. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, 7 E. 7th St., at Third Ave. 545-7536. Sept. 23 at 8.)

COYOTE DANCERS
The troupe premières three works of a spiritual nature, "Invocation: Monk's Dance," "E.T. Deva," and "To the Night Goddess." The seventeen-member company will also perform two repertory works, "Sipapu: The Land Where Your Eyes First Opened," and "Maher, It's Donald," a solo for the company's choreographer, Maher Benham. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Sept. 21-24 at 8.)

"BLACK FIRE"
The Alice Farley Dance Theatre offers a free site- and time-specific work marking the autumn equinox, with a dramatis personae that includes skeletal trees; "puffwups," or whirling dancers; a fish-spine woman; and the *disfrasados,* a group of ghouls based on Mexican carnival figures. (World Financial Center Winter Garden. Sept. 20 at 7.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

TONY RICE / PETER ROWAN / VASSAR CLEMENTS
Rice's graceful bluegrass guitar playing has sent a generation of aspiring guitarists into conniptions trying to duplicate his clean, high-speed, otherworldly sound. The dapper musician has introduced elements of jazz and blues to bluegrass, but he's never carried the music too far away from its roots; for some thirty years, one of his favorite guitars has been a 1935 D-28 herringbone Martin that belonged to his hero, the bluegrass innovator Clarence White. Rice's instrument, which sports a hole where the young White once shot it and which was once underwater for three hours during a Florida hurricane, has turned out to be more durable than his own voice. Seven years ago his warm baritone quit on him because of overuse, and these days Rice leaves the singing to Peter Rowan, a master of high lonesome who came of age in Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys. With the veteran fiddler Clements on hand, this promises to be one of the top bluegrass concerts of the year. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Sept. 20 at 8.)

JOSÉ FELICIANO
Though he made Puerto Rican pop hip long before anyone had ever heard of Ricky Martin, Feliciano remains best known to most listeners for his Doors cover ("Light My Fire"), his sitcom soundtrack theme ("Chico and the Man"), and his unlikely appearance in the movie "Fargo." On the heels of his fifty-fifth birthday, Feliciano has a lovely new album, "Noches de Bohemia," which suggests something of a comeback, and he's joined here by fellow troubadours Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul and Mary), Paul Simon, and others. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 20 at 8.)

FRED HERSCH
With his exquisite touch, sensitivity to texture, and poetic imagination, Hersch has become one of the great romantics of jazz piano. He's also cultivated an expansive repertoire that embraces composers from Richard Rodgers and Alex North to Billy Strayhorn and Ornette Coleman. In Hersch's hands such eclecticism is as natural—and as life-affirming—as breathing. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. Sept. 20 at 8.)

JAZZ COMPOSERS COLLECTIVE
One of the most interesting of the new-jazz ensembles to have formed during the nineties, **Ben Allison and Medicine Wheel** are distinguished by the leader's bantering bass work and adventurous writing, which gives the saxophonists **Ted Nash** and **Michael Blake** and the pianist **Frank Kimbrough** plenty to sink their teeth into. / Judging from his individualistic work with the late drum master Ed Blackwell, the saxophonist Dewey Redman, and others, it's clear that the bassist **Mark Helias** is among the unsung jazz heroes of the past twenty-five years. His own bands—this tightly knit, fiercely interactive trio being one of his most impressive to date—are always committed to new form and fresh improvisation. (New School, 55 W. 13th St. For more information, call 995-1552. Sept. 21 at 8.)

ALTAN
Perhaps the finest practitioners of contemporary Celtic music, this five-piece ensemble is capable of segueing from tender jigs to passionate bouzouki-driven raveups in a single tune. The group's latest album, "Another Sky," again showcases the otherworldly voice of vocalist Mairéad Ní Mhaonaigh (she formed the band in 1985 with her husband, Frankie Kennedy, who died of cancer in 1994), and features guest slide-guitar work from Bonnie Raitt. Live, the band makes any day into St. Patrick's. (Town Hall. Sept. 22 at 8.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
In his first film role, Paul Robeson, the man whose magnificent voice could bring life to a diner menu, didn't utter a word. Thanks to his equally arresting physical stature and expressive gifts as an actor, Robeson walks away with "Body and Soul," the 1925 silent film by the African-American director Oscar

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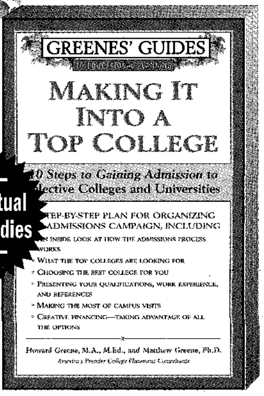
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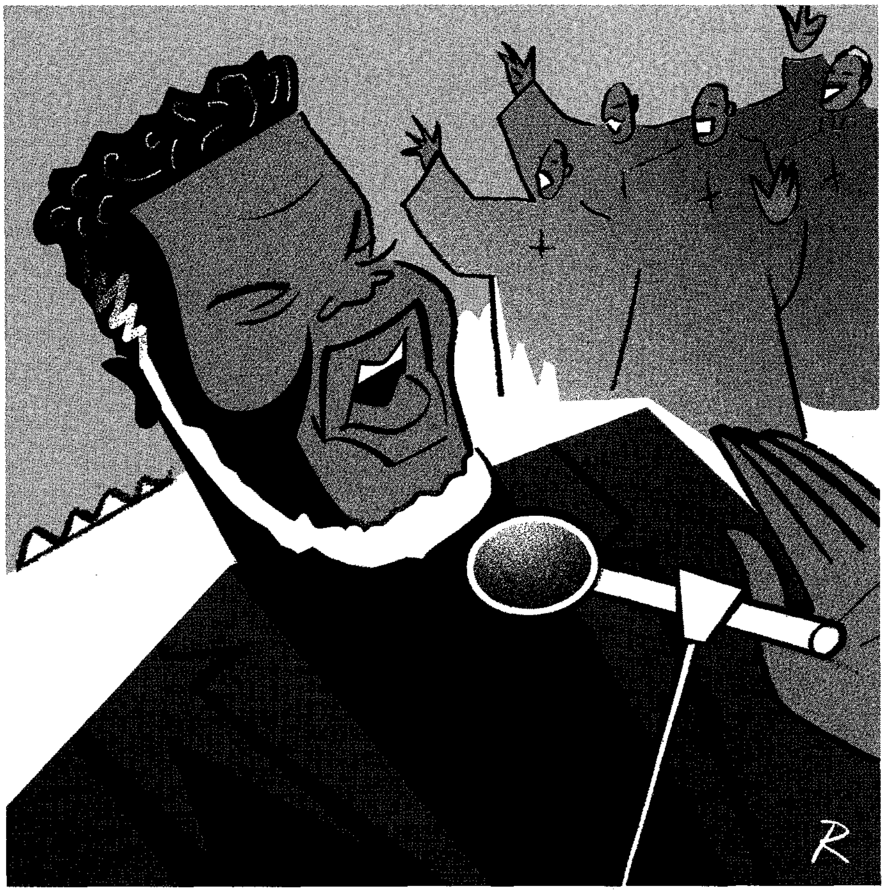
Micheaux. Now, the trombonist **Wycliffe Gordon**, a longtime associate of **Wynton Marsalis**, has written a new score for the film; tonight, during a screening of Micheaux's film, Gordon's new score will be performed by the **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra**, with the pianist **Eric Reed** as a featured soloist. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Sept. 24 at 5 and 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—Sept. 24: The **Reverend Timothy Wright**, whose forty years in the business have earned him the moniker the Godfather of Gospel, and the voices of Brooklyn's Grace Tabernacle Choir (where Wright is the pastor). This concert kicks off a Sunday-afternoon gospel series, complete with a soul-food buffet.



The Reverend Timothy Wright, in the BAMcafé's Sunday-afternoon gospel series.

ROBERT RISKO

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Sept. 21: The **Wild Colonials**, once the salonistes of the L.A. music scene (Rickie Lee Jones, among others, appeared on the band's 1996 CD, "This Can't Be Life"), have since been bounced from the majors. Fortunately, the band soldiers on, driven by Angela McCluskey's heartfelt honey-and-hot-sauce vocals. For this show, which they've dubbed a "Big Night Out," they're joined by members of the comedy troupe **Stella**, the singer-songwriter **Peter Salett**, and other guests. Sounds like a good time. Sept. 22-23: **Southern Culture on the Skids**, a group of psychobilly swamp rockers from Chapel Hill. Sept. 25-26: **Sleater-Kinney**, the critically acclaimed all-female, power-punk trio out of Olympia, Washington.

BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Sept. 21: A night of roaring surf music with **Seks Bomba**. Sept. 22: **Mark Eitzel**, the erstwhile leader of San Francisco's late and lamented American Music Club, brings his bittersweet, tenderloin songbook to town.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Sept. 22-24: The lapidary, postmodern folk of singer-songwriter **Jonatha Brooke**. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Sept. 21: **Zap Mama**, an exquisite, all-female vocal group founded by the Zaire-born singer Marie Daulne. Sept. 26: Where do you go if you are a successful Cuban ensemble and you don't want to wear out your post-Buena Vista welcome? One smart bet is America's richest musical city, New Orleans, where the Cuban trumpeter Jesús Alemmañy's multigenerational ensemble **¡Cubanismo!** recorded its latest album, "Mardi Gras Mambo." The band appears here with the Crescent City vocalist **John Boutté**, which just about guarantees a good party. ♦ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 20: Chicago's **Isotope 217** creates beautiful sonic tapestries, sometimes atmospheric, sometimes funky, using strands of guitar, cornet, trombone, and percussion, along with mild electronic effects. They appear tonight in celebration of their latest release, "Who Stole the I Walkman?"

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Sept. 23: **Mark Eitzel** (see Brownies).

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Sept. 20: **Saint Low**, the band formed by former Madder Rose vocalist Mary Lorson, produces enchanting and dark songs that linger in your mind the way the smoke of an extinguished candle hangs in the room, thanks to Lorson's supple voice and her imaginative songwriting skills. Sept. 22: **Andrew Bird's Bowl of Fire.** The classically trained violinist Bird, a frequent collaborator with the Squirrel Nut Zippers, stops by with his acoustic quartet, which mixes folk, rock, lieder, and New Orleans jazz, all bound together with Bird's agile wit.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Sept. 21: **Isotope 217** (see the Knitting Factory). Sept. 24: A seminal figure in the Australian punk scene of the past decade, **Chris Knox** has mellowed into a tuneful, whimsical iconoclast.

WETLANDS
161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Sept. 21: **Big Sister**, an all-female sextet from Woodstock, New York, rocks in the tradition of Janis Joplin. They get down and dirty with the blues, and everyone's the better for it.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Sept. 21-23: The **Christian McBride** quartet. Pop musicians aren't the only ones to develop retrospective crushes on the nineteen-seventies and eighties. The bassist McBride has a very soft spot for the fusion ventures of that time; his latest release, "Sci-Fi," is strewn with references to Weather Report, Jaco Pastorius, Stanley Clarke, and Herbie Hancock's Mwandishi band. (He also finds room for warm-hearted revisions of Steely Dan's "Aja" and the Police's "Walking on the Moon.") McBride's spectacular talent has so far been able to justify any direction his muse points him toward. Dining.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 24: The trumpeter **Dave Douglas** is a brave musician to venture onstage with the Dutch geniuses/madmen **Misha Mengelberg** and **Han Bennick.** With their subversive wit and determination to deflate the merest wisp of pomposity, the pianist Mengelberg and the drummer Bennick can turn a show into surrealist theatre. Douglas, to his credit, has a sly streak as wide as Houston Street; he can hold his own with these two both musically and in the humor department. The bassist **Brad Jones** will undoubtedly feel like Zeppo Marx at times. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

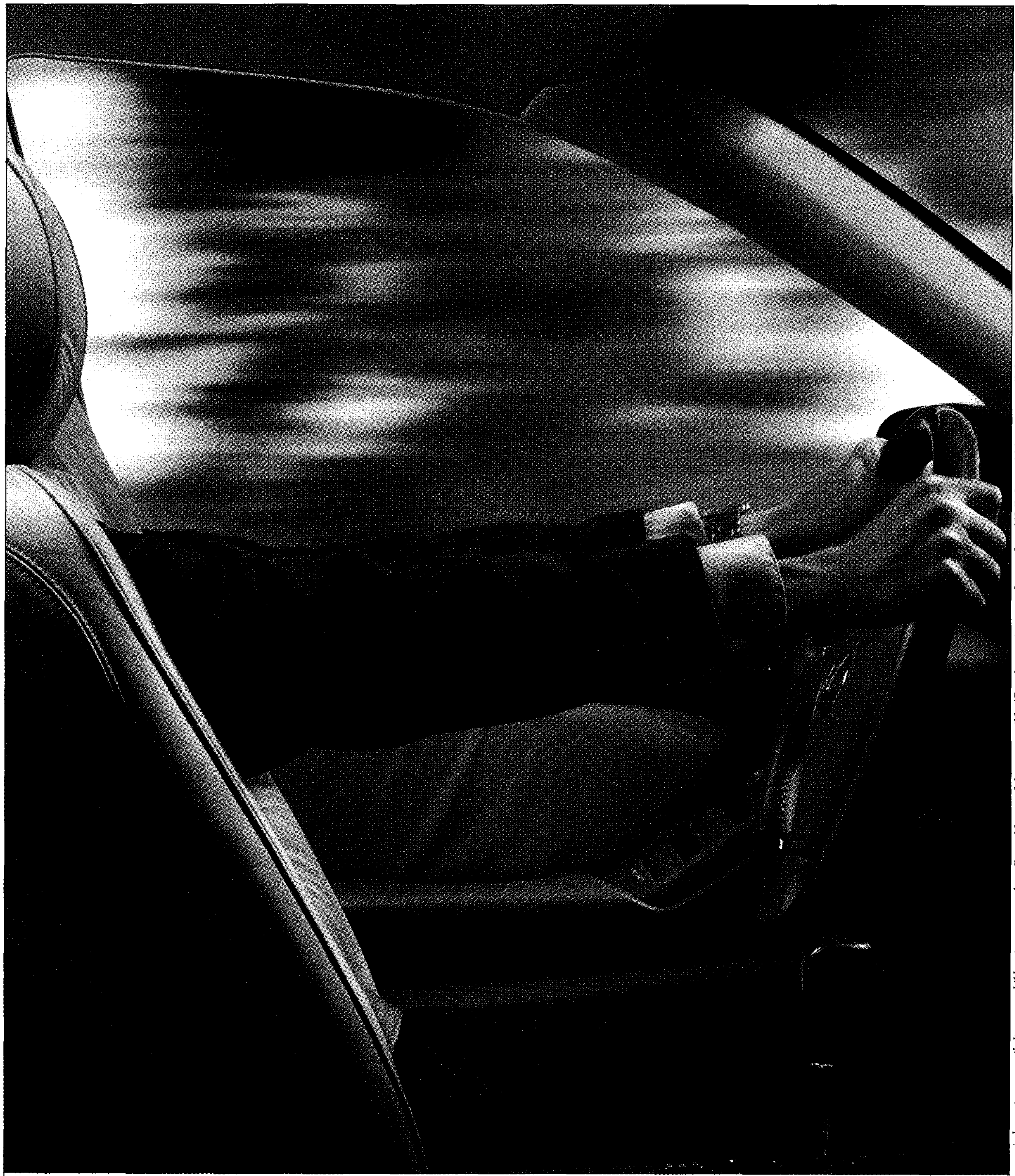
JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Sept. 24: Although each of these sixties veterans had their feet firmly in the free-jazz ferment, the saxophonist **Archie Shepp**, the trombonist **Roswell Rudd**, the bassist **Reggie Workman**, the trombonist **Grachan Moncur III**, and the drummer **Andrew Cyrille** were also seasoned players whose musical acumen tempered their work. The years have yet to take the hairy edge off of any of their playing. Dining.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Sept. 22-23: The **Oliver Lake Steel Quartet.** The saxophonist Lake, the avant-garde jazz icon and mainstay of the World Saxophone Quartet, has always had a taste for the tropics in his side projects. Lake's latest Caribbean-infused band incorporates the steel drum as a lead instrumental voice.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept. 24: The increasingly celebrated pianist **Brad Mehldau** may not be Bill Evans reincarnated, but he is an assured, introspective stylist who has developed a lovely give-and-take with his rhythm-mates **Jorge Rossy** (drums) and **Larry Grenadier** (bass). The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"The Divine Comtesse"** presents photographs, by Pierre-Louis Pierson, of the Countess de Castiglione (1837-1899), who acted as a special agent for Italian unification, carried on a series of notorious affairs



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(including one with Napoleon III), and endured many elaborate sittings, at her own request, to document her beauty, hair styles, and couture. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection"** presents masterpieces of the art form from the Tang dynasty (618-907) through the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"Queen Victoria and Thomas Sully"** gathers the oil portraits, oil sketches, drawings, and other ephemera connected to the preparation of the full-length portrait (also on view) by Sully, the Philadelphia-born British artist. The portrait depicts the young monarch, with bare shoulders, as she pauses to smile during the ascent to her throne. Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Projects 70 presents banners by a trio of artists (Jim Hodges, Beatrice Milhazes, and Faith Ringgold), which festoon the outside of the museum's façade. Milhazes's contribution is pure ornament, a swirl of tropical pink, green, and gold. Ringgold combines personal references and imagery by Matisse in a memorial to lost loved ones. Hodges's banner is by far the most winning. A pair of connect-the-dot constellations that correspond to Libra and Scorpio, the astrological signs of the artist and his partner, grace a cloth the inky color of the night sky (the reverse side is Liberace gold). Each star is a cutout hole, strung with small bells. Through Oct. 31. ♦ **"Making Choices."** The twenty-four-part show concentrates on works made between 1920 and 1960, drawn exclusively from the museum's extensive holdings, in a series of tightly focussed exhibitions, several devoted to a single artist (Man Ray, Cartier-Bresson, Morandi). Through Sept. 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"Amazons of the Avant-Garde"** features works from six women—Alexandra Exter, Natalia Goncharova, Liubov Popova, Olga Rozanova, Varvara Stepanova, and Nadezhda Udaltsova—who made impressive contributions to the Russian branches of experimental art in the early twentieth century. Through Jan. 7. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"Roni Horn: Still Water (The River Thames, for Example), 1999,"** an installation of fifteen photographs of the surface of the titular river, caught in a variety of moods of current and light. Through Jan. 14. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Hip-Hop Nation: Roots, Rhymes, and Rage"** presents videos, clothing and accessories, manuscripts of lyrics, F.B.I. letters, magazine covers, and installations that catalogue reaction to the genre. Through Dec. 31. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

GREGORY GILLESPIE
This memorial exhibition reminds us of the vibrant intensity of Gillespie's best work, which matches psychedelic fantasy with manic verisimilitude, suggesting a collaboration between Andrew Wyeth and R. Crumb. Highlights include one of the rarely seen "trattoria" paintings, made in Rome in the sixties, and two of the massive shrine paintings of the early nineties, bedecked with trompe-l'oeil tools and fruit. Among the most recent works are a sculptural tomb, designed to contain Gillespie's ashes, and "Self-Portrait, Triumphant," which seems to belie the artist's suicide last April, at the age of sixty-four. Through Sept. 30. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545.)

LAURIE HOGIN
With her cast of rabbits, monkeys, and roosters, Hogin offers a sardonic take on art history and contemporary culture. The rabbits recline on sumptuous silks, like odalisques. The monkeys appear as advertising mascots, pitching cigarettes, cupcakes, and "American Beauty." Most mysteriously, the roosters gobble up monarch butterflies in a creepy, crepuscular Arcadia. Hogin's technique, a pastiche of Audubon, Stubbs, et al., offers meticulous pleasures that offset the sometimes glib tone of these zoological allegories. Through Oct. 7. (Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 980-2323.)

Short List

WILL BARNET
De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Through Oct. 14.

ALAN BRAY
Schmidt-Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through Sept. 30.

IAN DAWSON
James Cohan, 41 W. 57th St. 755-7171. Through Oct. 7.

MARY FRANK
DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through Oct. 14.

DANIEL GARCÍA
Galeria Ramis Barquet, 41 E. 57th St. 644-9090. Through Oct. 7.

ANDREW MASULLO
Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780. Through Oct. 21.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE
Rickards, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 924-0858. Through Oct. 14.

Steve Schapiro's 1961 "Musician Backstage, Apollo Theater, Harlem," from "American Edge," at Benrubi (see Photography).

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DAVID SMITH
Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave. 744-2313.
Through Oct. 21.

EDWARD SOREL
Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 838-0333.
Through Sept. 29.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

WILLIAM DE LOTTIE
At first glance, "Wish You Were Here" looks like a reprise of de Lottie's two previous installations, one of which was featured at the Whitney Biennial. Once again, we are faced with squares of cheap, Day-Glo fabric, suspended on long poles and lit by halogen floor lamps. There's even the same Xeroxed photograph of Isaiah Berlin as a boy, though it's now covered in a black veil. Unlike its predecessors, however, "Wish" wraps around five walls. As a result, the projected squares read in sequence, concluding with the single draped image of Berlin. The effect is more pointedly elegiac but may also leave visitors a little impatient for new material. Through Oct. 7. (Eller, 530 W. 25th St. 206-6411.)

LOUISE FISHMAN
Perhaps the most accomplished of a small band of latter-day Abstract Expressionists, Fishman continues to make paintings that veer between asceticism and outright beauty. As usual, her brushstrokes are blunt and vehement, without any wristy grace notes. Color, likewise, is often sombre, leaning toward sooty neutrals. Fishman's reserve sometimes mutes a painting's impact, but more often, it sets us up for surprises. Through Oct. 21. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

PAT PASSLOF
Built from parallel strokes of tinder-dry earth colors, Passlof's latest paintings suggest tile patterns, brickwork, or matchstick architecture. Often, their agitated stripes also suggest debts to Sean Scully or early Frank Stella. But Passlof, a generation older than either, makes surprisingly distinctive things happen, even in this well-travelled pictorial territory. "Nevermore" gives Stella's black pinstripes the feeling of a majestic, starry nocturne. The sloping ochre columns of "Thoreau" read, on second glance, as wheat fields, complete with a picture-book rising sun. Through Oct. 7. (Harris, 529 W. 20th St. 463-9666.)

Short List

ROB DE MAR
Clementine, 526 W. 26th St.
243-5937. Through Oct. 7.

UDOMSAK KRISANAMIS
Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St.
627-5258. Through Oct. 7.

KARL MANN
Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St.
627-4819. Through Oct. 14.

ALICE NEEL
Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.
Through Oct. 14.

JOHN SALVEST
Poissant Projects, 140 W. 30th St.
279-8969. Through Oct. 14.

CHARLES SPURRIER
Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.
Through Oct. 14.

CLAUDE WAMPLER
Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.
Through Oct. 7.

LESLIE WAYNE
Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701.
Through Oct. 7.

MEG WEBSTER
Paula Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.
Through Oct. 14.

RACHEL WHITEREAD
Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St.
206-9100. Through Oct. 14.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

CHRISTINE HILL
From the creator of "Volksboutique" and "Tourguide" comes the new fall dramedy "Pilot," documenting the development of a late-night talk show, starring the artist. Hill has had great success creating art that looks just like commerce: she opened and staffed her own Berlin boutique and later offered guided tours of her adopted city, New York. A growing interest in improvisation and an "obsession with Conan O'Brien" have led her to set up office again downtown, where her current labor, the preproduction for a real-time pilot, is on view in a fully functional "applied setting," a desk behind a potted palm. Those viewers who submit their names are eligible to be part of the studio audience that attends the resulting show, which will be taped in the gallery on Oct. 6. Through Oct. 14. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

DO-HO SUH
Suh began this series of pieces by modelling five figurines several inches high, then mass-producing them in rubber. Thousands of his little men and women are positioned throughout the gallery, arms raised, hands flat, holding up a large section of glass floor, a heavy glass-topped desk, an architectural model of a civic-looking pedestal (called "Public Figures"), and, via a large welcome mat, the feet of gallerygoers. This group-identity/home-furnishings theme continues with "Who Am We?," a wide expanse of wallpaper covered with a fine polka-dot pattern of I.D. photos, each reproduced at less than an eighth of an inch high. The few framed art-on-the-wall pieces, rough prints and drawings, seem merely to demonstrate that this outlandishly decorated space can hold more common pictures, too. Through Oct. 7. (Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.)

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CORBAN WALKER
At first, Walker's long planks of plain, green-tinted window glass, propped against the wall on Plexiglas pegs, don't look that exciting. However, viewers who walk further into the gallery's white-walled, yellow-floored space will be rewarded by a subtle transformation; from the center of the room, "Mapping 4" is a lit and light-refracting structure that fills your peripheral vision, something like a forest—except that it's made from city materials, as if a rich Buddhist industrialist had bought someplace to meditate in. Those who prefer to study pieces of the whole will enjoy the small mirrors and a window on a column, through which it is possible to examine details of the work. Through Oct. 7. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224.)

Short List

NICOLA COSTANTINO
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through Oct. 7.
MARCEL DZAMA / JOCKUM NORDSTRÖM
Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074.
Through Oct. 7.
PIA STADTBÄUMER
Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.
Through Oct. 21.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Asia Week continues in the city's collecting community. Sept. 20: Chinese art works, including a spectacular Yuan-dynasty blue-and-white porcelain jar that has been in the family of the American journalist and utopian Charles A. Dana since he acquired it, in the eighteen-seventies. ♦ Sept. 21: Japanese and Korean pieces. ♦ Sept. 22: Indian and South Asian works, including paintings by Amrita Sher-Gil (a notable modernist of the nineteen-thirties, who inspired a character in Salman Rushdie's novel "The Moor's Last Sigh") and other twentieth-century Indian and Pakistani artists. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Sept. 20: An auction of Indian and South Asian art, in which a lucky bidder may walk away with what appears to be the earliest-dated Tibetan tanka (from 1479) still in private hands. ♦ Sept. 21: Chinese works of art, including ceramics, bronzes, and paintings. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

CHRISTIE'S EAST
Sept. 20: Prints. ♦ Sept. 26: European decorative art works. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0430.)

SWANN
An auction, mostly taken from a single collection, of nineteenth- and twentieth-century books, including first editions, signed copies, and private-press publications. Highlights include two copies of "Alice in Wonderland," one (from 1930) including a complete suite of lithographs by Marie Laurencin, the other (from 1866) enhanced by an inscription and pencil sketch (of the Mad Hatter) by the original "Alice" illustrator, John Tenniel. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. Sept. 21.)

ARTS OF PACIFIC ASIA SHOW
The 7th Regiment Armory, a major Upper East Side haven for antique shows, may be gearing up for a renovation, but collectors in the know shouldn't be too put out by any interruptions. They've already discovered that the 69th Regiment Armory, two miles to the south, is a more user-friendly venue, thanks to its manageable expanse and to the curatorial spirit encouraged by producers drawn to the space. The "Arts of Pacific Asia Show" zeroed in on this venue in 1995 and now returns for its sixth year, in which seventy-five international dealers and galleries offer a vast range of Asian art works ancient, modern, and in-between. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 25th St. Sept. 20-24. For information, call 532-1516.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

PINO DAL GAL
"Chicken Story" documents an active slaughterhouse outside Verona, Italy, in twenty color pictures, circa 1976. Dal Gal's hazy, cinematic compositions make the birds and their butchers look like the stars of a dark comedy. Through Oct. 28. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

SHEILA METZNER
Metzner has moved beyond her signature pigment-printed images, but she continues to take inspiration and technique from photography's past. "New York City 2000," her current series of hand-coated platinum prints, would look more at home in an old issue of Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work* than in any contemporary equivalent. Her refusal to take the city's familiar architectural icons for granted has yielded sensitive and respectful images of the Chrysler and Empire State Buildings and the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges. Through Oct. 21. (Stevenson, 338 W. 23rd St. 352-0070.)

JOEL MEYEROWITZ
These vintage prints from the late sixties through the mid-seventies predate Meyerowitz's better-known landscape work and reveal him as a pioneer in color street photography. He was one of the first to expand Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment" to include open-ended, luminous scenes that have become popular with contemporary photographers such as Philip-Lorca diCorcia. Pictures like "Camel Coat Couple in Street Steam" have no single protagonist, but rather a set of characters in action, dependent on one another to form the composition and make the picture. Through Oct. 21. (Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434.)

STEVE SCHAPIRO
Schapiro travelled across America during the nineteen-sixties documenting that decade's cast of politicians, musicians, and artists—both for mainstream

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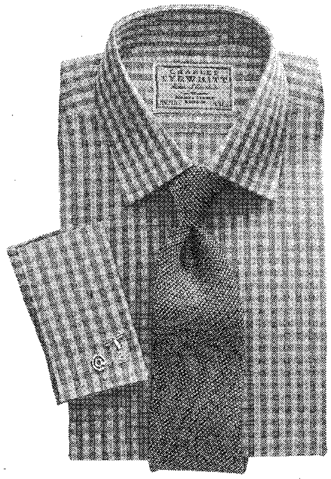

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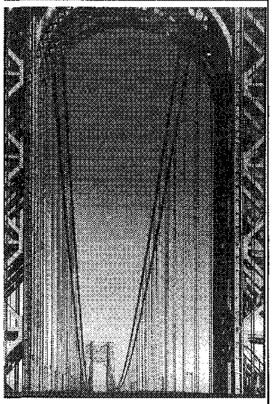

SWANN AUCTIONS

Margaret Bourke-White, "George Washington Bridge," vintage silver print, 1933. At auction Oct 11.

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magazines such as *Look*, *Life*, and *Newsweek* and for himself. "American Edge" reads something like a traditional photo-essay of the time, beginning with a series of 1959 images of square-looking white adolescents necking in the shade of the Coney Island boardwalk and moving on to the hot spots of the decade's social and artistic changes, capturing James Baldwin, Martin Luther King, Jr., Andy Warhol, and more than one Kennedy. Most of Schapiro's subjects will be familiar, even to younger viewers, but his images offer a relatively little-known alternative to the era's exhausted visual canon. Through Oct. 14. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

BERT TEUNISSEN
Vermeer might have appreciated these finely detailed pictures of elderly Dutch men and women at home. Though Teunissen takes advantage of diffuse, gold-toned natural light in each wide shot, he never shows a window, perhaps in deference to the cloistered lives he documents. Through Oct. 4. (Gallery 24, at 552 W. 24th St. 414-0370.)

JAMES WELLING
Welling began his career as a student of the conceptual photographer John Baldessari, but his style has continued to change, ranging from traditional landscapes to abstract still-lifes of broken glass on velvet. This exhibition includes four projects, but two stand out: Polaroid interiors from the late seventies, with color sweetened by heating and refrigeration during processing; and recent "New Abstractions," large-format, digitally manipulated black-and-white work that recalls both modernist photographs of industrial architecture and the abstract paintings of Kazimir Malevich. Through Oct. 7. (Gorney, Bravin and Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 352-8372.)

TOM WOOD
The Liverpudlian Wood has been photographing his adopted city's buses and their passengers for nearly twenty years, in black-and-white and color, from the street and from on board. His literally and figuratively reflective images of these vehicles, with their panoramic view of the street, offer a thoughtful, contemporary antidote to several generations of more predictable, romanticized pictures of trains, planes, and cars. Through Nov. 4. (Erben, 516 W. 20th St. 645-8701.)

FRANK YAMRUS
This series of black-and-white shots reveals little of the body—just head and shoulders—but discerning viewers will guess immediately what's happening beyond the frame. Yamrus asked his subjects, both male and female, to masturbate for the camera, and he chose these pictures of "Rapture" from the moments just before, during, and after climax. If nothing else, they offer a revealing study of the ability to pose even (or especially) in the throes of orgasm. Through Oct. 14. (Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—**"A Durable Memento"** presents daguerreotypes of places (Connecticut, Liberia) and people (John Brown) taken by Augustus Washington, the son of a former slave. Through Sept. 24. **"Positions in the Life World"** surveys Martha Rossler's photos and videos, including such classics as her 1975 "Semiotics of the Kitchen." Through Oct. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

MILES COOLIDGE
Kaplan, 416 W. 14th St. 645-7325.
Through Oct. 7.

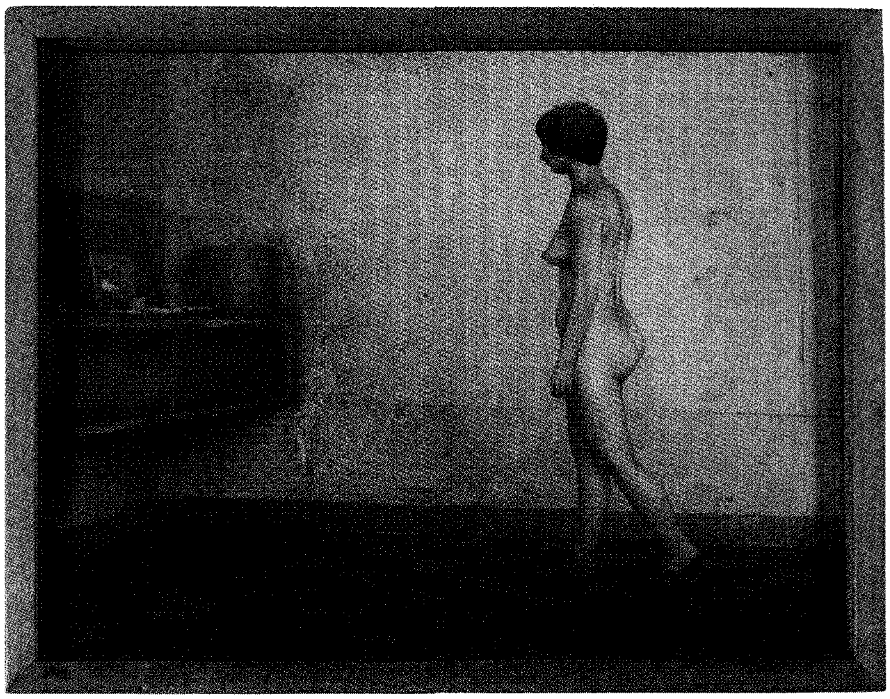
ROBERT FRANK
Scalo, 560 Broadway. 334-9393.
Through Oct. 21.

ROBERT POLIDORI
Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.
Through Oct. 14.

MELVIN SOKOLSKY
Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223.
Through Sept. 30.

AMY STEINER
Rare, 435 W. 14th St. 645-5591.
Through Oct. 14.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum.



"Woman Walking in a Room," by Gregory Gillespie, at Forum.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Opening performances of the season, which continues through April 28. **Don Giovanni,** featuring Renée Fleming (as Donna Anna), Solveig Kringelborn (as Donna Elvira), Hei-Kyung Hong (as Zerlina), Paul Groves, Bryn Terfel (in the title role),

Ferruccio Furlanetto (as Leporello), John Relyea (as Masetto), and Sergei Koptchak; conducted by James Levine. (Sept. 25 at 6:30.) ♦ **Samson et Dalilah,** with Denyce Graves, Plácido Domingo, Sergei Leiferkus, and René Pape; Mark Elder. (Sept. 26 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Sept. 20 at 7:30 and Sept. 24 at 1:30: Donizetti's "Roberto Devereux," with soprano Lauren Flanigan in the role of Queen Elizabeth and a cast that also includes mezzo-soprano Jane Dutton, tenor Fernando de la Mora, and baritone Mark Delavan; conducted by George Manahan. ♦ Sept. 22 at 8 and Sept. 26 at 7:30: "La Traviata," with Mary Dunleavy, Bruce Fowler, and Stephen Powell; Joseph Rescigno. ♦ Sept. 23 at 1:30: "Le Nozze di Figaro," with Sari Gruber (as Susanna), Pamela Armstrong (Countess Almaviva), Paula Rasmussen (Cherubino), Dean Ely (Figaro), and John Hancock (Count Almaviva); Steuart Bedford. ♦ Sept. 23 at 8: "Madama Butterfly." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

TABLES FOR TWO

RICE
227 Mott St. (226-5775)—Rice is the khaki pants of world cuisine. Predictable? Yes. Bland? Perhaps. But it all depends on what you put on top. And who knows more about embellishing the ordinary than the hopelessly hip Nolita crowd?

On a block filled with funky boutique displays of knit handbags, crêpe blouses, and asymmetrical skirts, you'll find the large open windows of this two-legged three-year-old operation: one side is a bustling takeout counter with an abbreviated menu and limited barstool seating (perfect for wolfing down some Thai shrimp rice balls while chatting on your cell phone), and the other is a deep, narrow dining room where pairs and small clusters merge snugly into one attractive chopstick-wielding crowd.

A waitress tells tales of dieting models who order Indian chicken curry without rice. They're just here, she speculates, for the rice *scene.* But the grains are really the thing: sticky rice, Thai black rice, Lebanese rice with roasted vermicelli and laurel, and Bhutanese red rice, most of which are organically grown in far-off countries. The menu is vegetarian-sensitive (which might explain why so few people take advantage of the ashtrays on each table), with eggplant maki, butternut-squash chowder, and myriad rice-bowl options, chief among them vegetarian meatballs (sweet or spicy) and a killer coconut curry. Carnivores can dig into Malaysian jerky (which is served cubed and moist), lemongrass-chicken salad, and cold Thai beef salad, which is especially good atop "green" rice—basmati infused with cilantro, parsley, and spinach.

Rice has a decent but limited wine list, which leans toward the sweet (Rieslings, Dolcettos, Beaujolais) to combat the general spiciness of the food. There's also a variety of freshly pressed juices, including some seasonal eccentricities—watermelon juice and pear cider—that are hard to resist. Various teas are served with an engaging array of Beehive flavored honeys (sage, star thistle, organic desert wildflower, for instance) that don't taste like anything more than plain honey until the hot tea releases their cryptic flavors. And for dessert—you get the idea by now—rice paste stuffed with red-bean jam, Indian rice pudding, a peculiar Thai banana-leaf wrap (sweet plantain rolled in sticky rice), and homemade Rice Krispie treats are on offer. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $5-$11.)

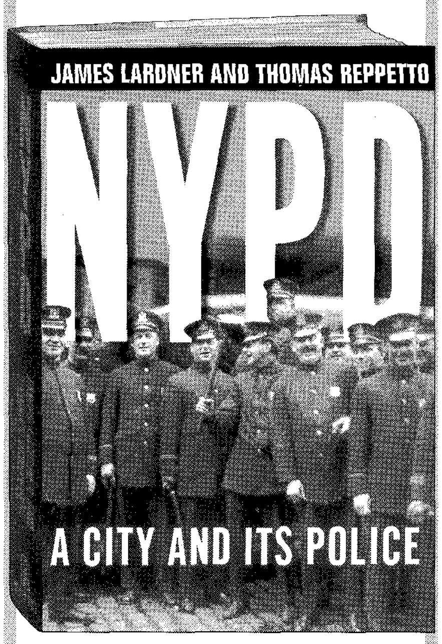
—*Matt Dellinger*

"WHAT PRICE CONFIDENCE"
Ernst Krenek had no chance of flourishing in his native Vienna under the Third Reich: of Czech origin, he was briefly married to Anna Mahler (Gustav's daughter, and therefore partly Jewish); scored an international hit in 1927 with "Jonny Spielt Auf," a jazz opera with a black title character (as well as a separate operatic parody of Mussolini); and fell in with such "degenerate" musical personalities as Berg, Webern, and Hindemith. In 1937, he made his way to the United States, accepting teaching positions first at Vassar and then at Hamline University, in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he composed his comic chamber opera "What Price Confidence," in 1945. In Krenek's centenary year, the forty-five-minute work receives its New York première, fully if modestly staged, and preceded by several of his songs, set to texts by Goethe and Rilke. The performers are members of the Elysium–Between Two Continents ensemble. (Theatre of the Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 870-6784. Sept. 21-23 and Sept. 26-28 at 8 and Sept. 24 at 3. ♦ **Note:** On Sept. 25 at 7, at the same venue, the ensemble offers a program of songs by composers who were incarcerated at the Terezin concentration camp, including Ervín Schulhoff, Pavel Haas, and Viktor Ullmann.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUS

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Kurt Masur conducts the opening performances of the season. Sept. 20 at 8: Soprano Kiri te Kanawa is featured in two Mozart arias and the final scene from Strauss's "Arabella," in a concert that also includes Mozart's Overture to "Die Zauberflöte," Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony, and Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel." ♦ Sept. 21, Sept. 23, and Sept. 25 at 8 and Sept. 22 at 2: Following the opening-night gala concert, the season begins in earnest with a three-week celebration of the music of Mendelssohn, for whom Mr. Masur has long felt a deep affinity, thanks in part to his involvement with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra (which Mendelssohn directed from 1835 until his death, in 1847, and which Masur oversaw from 1970 to 1996). The opening subscription week brings to the fore the "Fingal's Cave Overture" (a.k.a. "The Hebrides"), the E-Minor Violin Concerto (spotlighting the orchestra's principal associate concertmaster, Sheryl Staples), the "Ruy Blas" Overture (which Mendelssohn dashed off in a day or two in March of 1839, for a charity performance of a Victor Hugo play he particularly loathed), and the "Italian" Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. ♦ **Note:** Mendelssohn's C-Minor Piano Trio is offered in pre-concert recitals, beginning each evening at 6:45 and open to ticket holders.)

SALUTING ISAAC STERN
The noted violinist and all-around *macher* of the classical-music industry spent what seemed like several years celebrating his seventy-fifth birthday. The festivities must have agreed with him, as he now begins a round of performances marking his eightieth (which actually occurred in July). Carnegie Hall—and, by extension, all of New York—owes a great debt to Mr. Stern for spearheading the campaign to keep the building from being razed, back in 1960. In 1997, the hall named its auditorium after him (though the name Isaac Stern Auditorium does not show signs of entering everyday parlance), and on Sept. 24 it offers a full day of testimonial concerts. At 2: A family concert that includes works by Bernstein (the "West Side Story" Suite), Saint-Saëns (excerpts from the "Carnival of the Animals"), and Jon Deak, who will be on hand as emcee; conductor Kurt Masur and members of the New York Philharmonic will also participate. ♦ At 4: Another family concert, this one hosted by mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne and including performances by soprano Sari Gruber, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Rivera, baritone Scott Hendricks, and pianist Warren Jones. ♦ At 7:30: A *Who's Who* of musical luminaries, mostly of the string or piano persuasion, join the Symphony Orchestra of the Curtis Institute of Music, as well as Peter Ustinov and the obligatory "benefit-salute" guests Betty Comden and Adolph Green. Three of Mr. Stern's children also participate:



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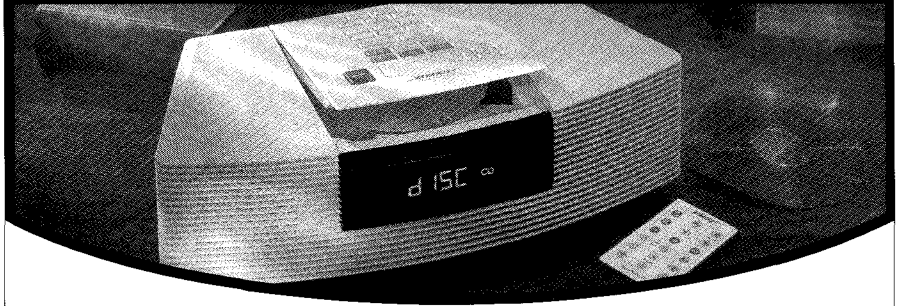

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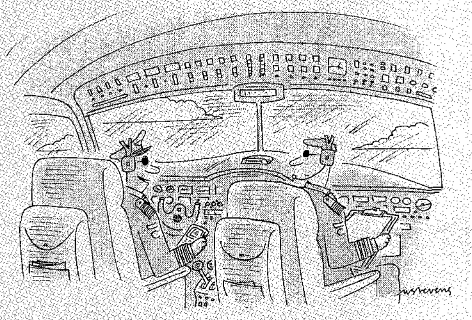

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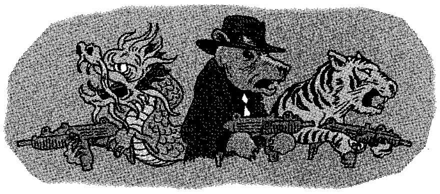
BOOK CURRENTS

Ganging Up



TONY MILLIONAIRE

While the European Union and the World Trade Organization bicker over tariffs and border restrictions, organized crime has gone global with much less fuss—and business is booming. Russian gangs oversee prostitution rackets in Paris while helping Colombian cartels launder drug money, with Italian help, on the Riviera. Asian gangs operating out of Holland ship amphetamines to Australia for distribution by the local Lebanese and Romanian mobs. In **THE MERGER** (Overlook), Jeffrey Robinson extracts a lesson from this nefarious free-for-all: until the lawful world revises its outdated notions of national policing, "the twenty-first century will belong to transnational criminals."

In Russia, the rubble of the socialist system has become a Maffiya playground; similarly, gangsters thrive in China, where capitalism is loosening the Party's grip. Martin Booth's **THE DRAGON SYNDICATES** (Carroll & Graf) describes the activities of the Triads on the Pacific Rim—managing casinos in Macao and strong-arming Hong Kong film studios—as well as in Chinese communities all over the world. The Triads are also venturing into the growth industry of such high-tech crimes as electronic counterfeiting and credit-card fraud.

The Internet's endless criminal possibilities have given rise to a new breed of technophilic mobsters who pack electronic calculators instead of Uzis. Robert Whiting's **TOKYO UNDERWORLD** (Vintage) traces the career of Nick Zappetti, an East Harlem-raised hood who made a fortune on the yakuza-infested streets of postwar Japan. For years, Zappetti was known as the King of Roppongi, until he found himself edged out by the new wave of corporate wise guys. He was nonplussed: "What the hell is the point of being yakuza," he says, "if you act like everyone else?"

—*William Cohen*

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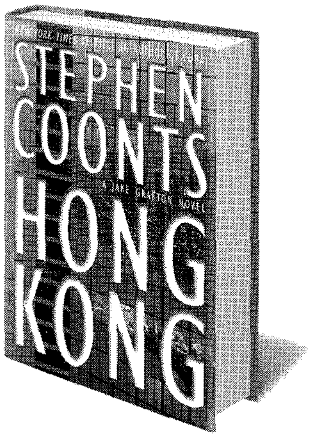
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New York Times bestselling author Stephen Coonts returns with *Hong Kong*, a potent story that finds Admiral Jake Grafton in a desperate battle to save his kidnapped wife and possibly the world. (St. Martin's Press)

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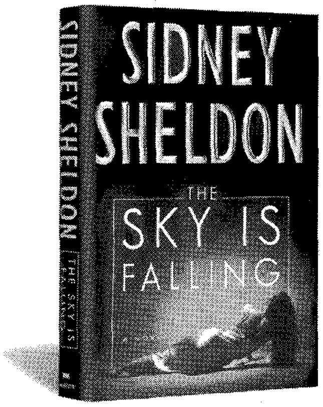
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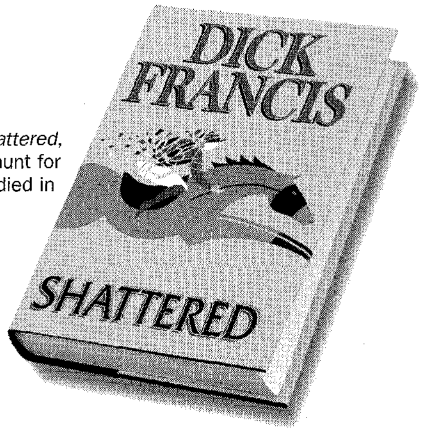
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SHATTERED

SHATTERED

by Dick Francis

Three-time Edgar Award-winner Dick Francis steps up to the gate with *Shattered*, a high-stakes mystery that finds Gerard Logan caught up in a menacing hunt for a stolen video tape left for him by his friend, jockey Martin Stukely, who died in a racing accident. (Putnam)

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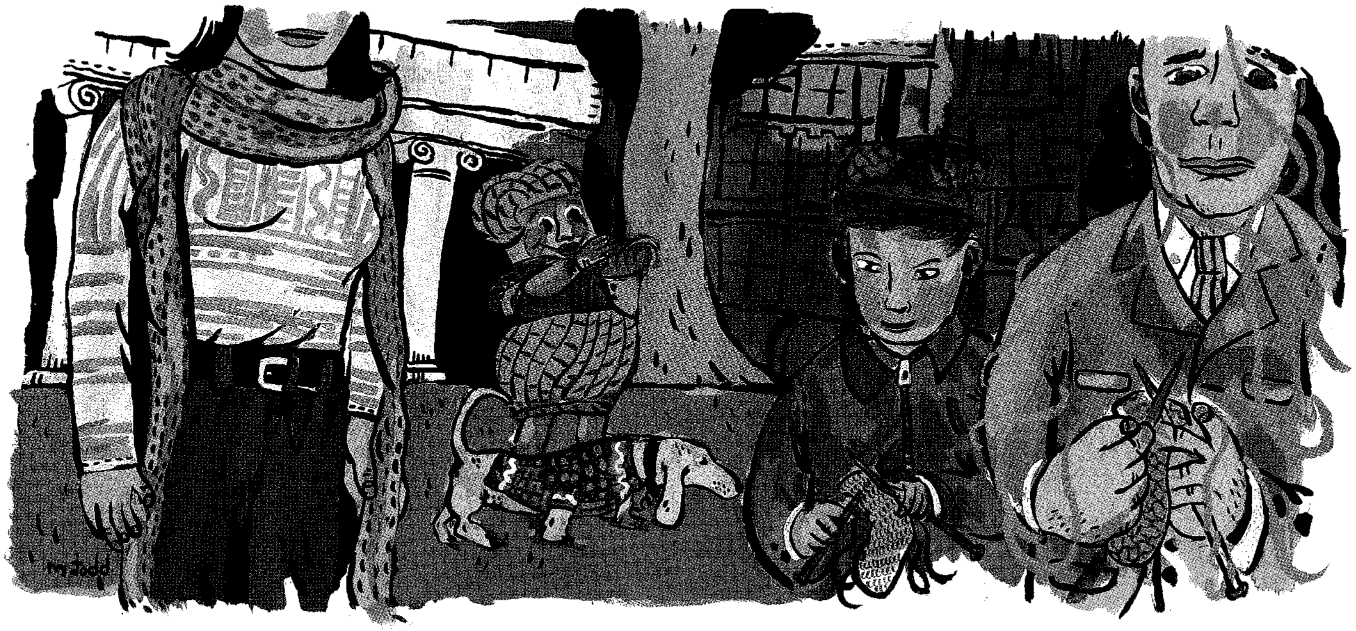
Prices effective at store locations through 10/2/00 his sons David and Michael (as conductors) and his daughter Shira (a rabbi, who will share some reminiscences). (247-7800. ♦ Note: On Sept. 23, three Isaac Stern movies will be shown at Weill Recital Hall: a recent PBS documentary at 2:30, "From Mao to Mozart" at 5, and an assemblage of clips from throughout his career at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 247-7800.)

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY
Kenneth Schermerhorn conducts Mark O'Connor's Double Concerto for Two Violins (featuring the composer and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg), in addition to Beethoven's "The Creatures of Prometheus" Overture, Strauss's "Der Rosenkavalier" Suite, and Ives' Symphony No. 2. The last is performed using a new edition by musicologist Jonathan Elkus (incorporating more than a thousand changes to the previous "standard edition"), which the orchestra also used for its new recording of this work for Naxos' "American Classics" series. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 25 at 8.)



The Knit-Out & Crochet 2000 festival, in Union Square Park (see Above and Beyond).

MARK TODD

RECITALS

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER BAND
The ensemble presents an all-Dowland program, featuring soprano Julianne Baird and countertenor Marshall Coid. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 20 at 8.)

CONTINUUM
The modern-music ensemble presents works by Ernst Krenek and Robert Erickson. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. Sept. 21 at 1 and Sept. 24 at 2. Admission by contribution.)

BARGEMUSIC
Sept. 21 and Sept. 23 at 7:30: Pianist Anne-Marie McDermott performs Bach's C-Minor Partita, Ani Kavafian joins her for Beethoven's Violin Sonata in E-Flat Major (Op. 12, No. 3), and cellist Fred Sherry completes the ensemble for Mendelssohn's D-Minor Piano Trio. ♦ Sept. 22 at 7:30 and Sept. 24 at 4: The same players offer Copland's Violin Sonata and piano trios by Mozart (in C Major, K. 548) and Brahms (in B Major). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

SPOTLIGHTING STEVE REICH
The composer, one of the most successful in elevating the language of circa-1970 minimalism, is being honored with Columbia University's William Schuman Award, bestowed occasionally (this is the sixth award in two decades) to honor lifetime achievement in composition. Two concerts enhance the occasion, with both including performances by Mr. Reich and his ensemble of the 1976 classic "Music for 18 Musicians," along with other works. Sept. 21 at 7:30: The award ceremony, plus performances of "Drumming" (Part One) and Reich's Sextet. ♦ Sept. 23 at 7:30: "Music for Pieces of Wood" and "Different Trains" complete the program. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799.)

BASICALLY BACH
Every autumn since 1993, St. Peter's Church has provided an annual weekend of cantatas and instrumental music for Bach lovers. This year (the two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the composer's death), the organizers up the ante by programming three of his late masterpieces in a single day and following up with an organ recital. Sept. 23 at 2: The "Goldberg" Variations, performed by harpsichordist Kenneth Cooper. ♦ At 4: "The Art of Fugue," played at the organ by Walter Hilse. ♦ At 8: The B-Minor Mass, with Ralph C. Schultz conducting the Saint Peter's Choir, the Gregg Smith Singers, and an orchestra assembled for the occasion. ♦ Sept. 24 at 2: On his fifteenth birthday, the organist-on-the-rise Felix Hell, who already has three CDs to his credit, performs six works by Bach, in addition to pieces by Bach's near-contemporaries Dietrich Buxtehude and Vincent Lübeck and his later admirers Mendelssohn and Widor. (Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-2200.)

LEONIDAS KAVAKOS
The violinist, assisted by pianist Peter Nagy, performs Brahms's G-Major Sonata, Bartók's Rhapsody No. 2, and pieces by Zemlinsky, Kreisler, and Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Sept. 23 at 8.)

MIRÓ STRING QUARTET
The ensemble plays Mozart's Quartet in D Major (K. 575) and Janáček's Quartet No. 1 (the "Kreutzer Sonata"). (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 24 at 3.)

AL QANTARAH
This ensemble's name is taken directly from a river in eastern Sicily (the island the group calls home), but the word also means "bridge" in Arabic—a nice metaphor for underscoring the role Sicily played as a crossroads of Italian, North African, and Middle Eastern culture during the Middle Ages. In this concert, the five musicians of Al Qantarah play instruments from various folk traditions to interpret Sicilian pieces from the twelfth century, in addition to medieval Spanish works. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Sept. 24 at 8.)

CAROL WINCENC AND FRIENDS
The flutist is joined by numerous colleagues for a program of chamber works by Bach. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Sept. 25 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

VIVIANE HAGNER
In her New York début recital, the violinist plays sonatas by Mozart (in B-Flat Major, K. 378), Saint-Saëns (in D Minor), and Ysaÿe (his Fourth Unaccompanied Sonata), in addition to pieces by Brahms, Debussy, George Rochberg (his "Caprice Variations"), and Wieniawski. Pianist Avner Arad assists. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Sept. 26 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

SHARPEN UP
Back in the mid-seventies, when drug dealers had the run of Union Square, the place was known by local residents as a needle park. Now that it's home to greenmarkets, the name no longer applies. But on Sept. 24, from noon to 5, needles of a different sort will be in evidence, during Knit-Out & Crochet 2000, a festival that includes free lessons, fashion shows (for humans and for dogs), and an appearance by the Sweater Doctor, who will answer questions about the craft. (For more information, call 800-662-9999.)

READINGS
Sept. 20 at 6:30: By poet Stephen Kuusisto. (Posman Books. 1 University Pl. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 20 at 7:30: By the singer-songwriter Kinky Friedman, from his latest detective novel, "The Mile High Club." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 21 at 7: By John Lithgow, from his children's book, "The Remarkable Farkle McBride." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 66th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 25 at 8: By poets Rachel Hadas, Pat Mangan, and Erik Schneider. (11th Street Bar, 510 E. 11th St., between Avenues A and B. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
Sept. 20 at 7:30: Verena Kossodo, Richard Lynn, Peter Phillips, and other members of the Wagner Society discuss the recent performance of the "Ring" cycle in Bayreuth. (Liederkranz Foundation, 6 E. 87th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Sept. 21 at 7: Thomas West, a former editor of *Art International* and a longtime resident of France, gives an illustrated lecture on the history of Burgundy wines. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160.)

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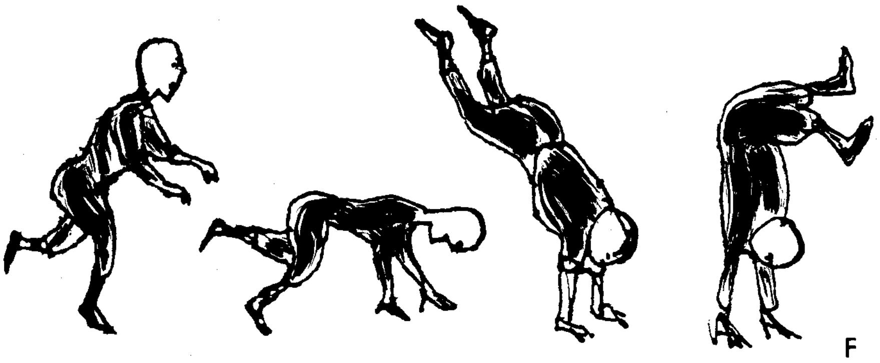


MOVIES OPENING

CHUTNEY POPCORN
A cosmopolitan Indian-American artist (Nisha Ganatra), who's also a lesbian, agrees to have a child for her more traditional, and infertile, sister. With Madhur Jaffrey. Directed by Ganatra. Opening Sept. 22.

DANCER IN THE DARK
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 22.

DOUBLE PARKED
Callie Thorne plays a divorced mother who works as a meter maid to support her son (Rufus Read), a pudgy asthmatic who's on his way to juvenile delinquency in this bittersweet comedy. Opening Sept. 22.

THE EXORCIST: THE VERSION YOU'VE NEVER SEEN
A rerelease of William Friedkin's 1973 blockbuster horror movie, with restored scenes. Opening Sept. 22.

THE FANTASTICKS
The popular musical, adapted for the big screen by Michael Ritchie. Opening Sept. 22.

LEFT LUGGAGE
In this drama about anti-Semitism set in Antwerp in 1972, a radical student (Laura Fraser) takes a job as a nanny for a Hasidic family. Directed by Jeroen Krabbé. Opening Sept. 22.

UNDER SUSPICION
Stephen Hopkins directed this thriller with Morgan Freeman as a police captain who suspects that an attorney (Gene Hackman) might be responsible for the death of a young girl. Opening Sept. 22.

URBAN LEGENDS: THE FINAL CUT
Students filming a documentary about urban legends are stalked by an unknown killer in this horror flick directed by John Ottman. Opening Sept. 22.

WOMAN ON TOP
A romantic comedy with Penelope Cruz as a Brazilian woman who finds a new life in San Francisco as a celebrity chef. Directed by Fina Torres. Opening Sept. 22.

FILM NOTES

THE BALLAD OF RAMBLIN' JACK
Aiyana Elliott crafted this loving, affecting documentary of her father, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, the legendary folksinger who was both a disciple of Woody Guthrie and a mentor to Bob Dylan (who later denied Jack's influence). The son of a Jewish doctor from Brooklyn, Ramblin' Jack fashioned himself as a folksinger, and, after his early success as part of the Washington Square folk revival, he spent decades singing songs of lumberjacks, cotton pickers, and cowboys until his 1995 album "South Coast" brought him belated recognition. Father and daughter travel the United States visiting old friends, like Kris Kristofferson and Arlo Guthrie, and throughout Jack sustains a wistful, funny monologue that imparts his own peculiar brand of wisdom: "My advice to young people today: Learn how to whittle." He's a master storyteller, and it's easy to get caught up in the spell of his words and miss the film's sad core.—*Michael Agger* (Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinema, and Waverly.)

BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY
An anti-war epic, it's like one of those commemorative issues of *Life*. This one covers 1956 to 1976, and the counterculture is presented in a nostalgic, aesthetically reactionary way: it's made part of our certified public memories. The director, Oliver Stone, plays bumper cars with the camera and uses cutting to jam you into the action, and you can't even enjoy his uncouthness, because it's put at the service of sanctimony. The pure-of-heart, Catholic, and patriotic hero Ron Kovic (Tom Cruise) thinks war is how he'll prove himself a man. He joins the Marine Corps and is sent to Vietnam; in 1968 his spine is severed, and he's left in a wheelchair, impotent, paralyzed from the chest down. Overblown right from the start, this story is constructed as a series of blackout episodes that suggest the Stations of the Cross; rising strings alert you to the heavy stuff. Then the finale—Resurrection—takes Ron into white light, and John Williams lays on the trumpets. Released in 1989.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 23 and Sept. 25.)

CECIL B. DEMENTED
The new John Waters picture takes its place in the long and semi-honorable tradition of Hollywood self-scorn. The title character is an underground movie director (Stephen Dorff) dedicated to the demolition of standard studio pap. Surrounded by his gang of guerrilla technicians, he kidnaps a star (Melanie Griffith) and forces her to play the lead in his latest slice of zero-budget decadence. As Cecil and his crew attack multiplexes and movie sets, it's never quite clear where they or Waters are pointing their radical rage: at the process of filmmaking, at the national theatre chains, or at those citizens of a free America who exercise their right to watch baloney.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/21 & 8/28/00.) (Angelika Film Center and Chelsea Cinemas.)

THE CELL
A man's intestines twirled around a golden spit; the pulsating organs of a dissected horse encased in glass; dead women pieced together as mechanical dolls—these are just some of the gruesome tableaux encountered by Jennifer Lopez, who plays a child psychologist who travels, via experimental drug, into the mind of a serial killer. The plot doesn't make much sense, but the imagery is arresting. The director, Tarsem Singh, made his name in music videos, and his feature début is full of intense visual trickery; he relies on surreal contrasts (snowflakes falling on a sunlit desert) and clever cuts (from pouring milk to a body drenched in bleach). Since most of the film takes place inside a psychopath's mind, the normal, comforting conventions of suspense don't apply.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Ave., 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE DECALOGUE
In 1988 and 1989, the Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski made a series of ten films for Polish television, in which each movie, roughly an hour in length, was devoted to one of the Ten Commandments. The films, set largely around an apartment complex in Warsaw, are not so much literal illustrations of the commandments as fables inspired by them—very modern fables, it turns out, featuring relations between men and women, and parents and children, of a depth and intensity not seen since Ingmar Bergman stopped making movies in the early eighties. In Polish.—*David Denby* (6/12/00) (The Screening Room.)

DECISION AT SUNDOWN
In a string of modest, low-budget oaters, director Budd Boetticher used the flinty, limited actor Randolph Scott as skillfully as Sergio Leone, in his spaghetti Westerns, used the squinty, limited actor Clint Eastwood. Square-jawed and hawkeyed, like a Chester Gould cartoon brought to life, Scott's screen persona for Boetticher was that of an unequivocally ethical man, closemouthed and brusque to the point of ambiguity. This 1957 Western shows how such a square figure can become the center of an exquisite portrait of moral tension. Scott enters the town of Sundown bent on exacting justice for his wife's suicide from a man who may not be as responsible for it as Scott initially thinks. Although the action here is more claustrophobic than in Boetticher's best frontier fables, the opening reels are a lesson in conjuring dynamic movement with limited means. Noah Beery, Jr., plays an immensely likable Sancho Panza to Scott's sagebrush Knight of the Woeful Countenance; and the mid-section, set largely in a saloon, is like "High Noon" turned inside out and flecked with shavings from "The Iceman Cometh."—*Michael Sragow* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 23.)

GIMME SHELTER
The facts of the Altamont debacle are well known: Hell's Angels, hired as security by the Rolling Stones for a free concert at a Bay Area speedway, bullied and beat their way through the audience, eventually stabbing to death a young black man named Meredith Hunter. What is less well known, perhaps, is how skillfully the Maysles Brothers' 1970 documentary builds to that horrible conclusion. In the film's opening scenes, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, and company light up Madison Square Garden with effulgent performances of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Satisfaction." But the Maysleses undermine the triumphant mood by intercutting scenes of the Stones ensconced in a cramped editing room, reviewing rushes from Altamont (including a truly wrenching shot of Hunter's stabbing, parsed and slowed for maximum effect). The pain in Jagger's eyes as he watches the murder footage lasts only a moment before he papers over it with his strutting-cock persona, which in turn dissipates almost immediately. It is the collision of these two extremes—the Stones as erotic gods, the Stones as chastened schoolboys—which generates the film's enduring pathos.—*Ben Greenman* (Film Forum.)

GIRL ON THE BRIDGE
A waifish young woman (Vanessa Paradis) attempts to drown herself but is saved by a knife thrower (Daniel Auteuil) who persuades her to join his act, where she becomes both nerveless victim and indispensable muse. He whirls her from one fancy location to the next, living on the slim proceeds of their success and gazing with avuncular disdain upon her incessant amours. The movie promises to be as steely as the flying blades, and the knife-tossing sequences make you flinch; but the director, Patrice Leconte, seems unable to match the coolness of his heroine, and the story droops into whimsy. Still, here is your chance to study the phenomenon that is Ms. Paradis—a huge draw in France and the beloved of Johnny Depp, who sports a similar set of cheekbones. In French.—*A.L.* (Angelika Film Center and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

HUMAN RESOURCES
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (State.)

LOVE & SEX
The writer-director Valerie Breiman, in her first feature, has put together an inconsequential but charming romantic comedy starring the long-stemmed, unpretentious beauty Famke Janssen as a Los Angeles magazine writer and Jon Favreau ("Swingers") as her boyfriend, a wisecracking, rather infantile painter. The movie offers little more than the latest forms of sexual banter, but the teasing mock crises are easy enough to take, and the two stars have a nice rhythm together. Janssen, with better material, could blossom into the next Julia Roberts; she's pretty irresistible even in this low-key stuff.—*D.D.* (Empire 25, 62nd & Broadway, and Union Square.)

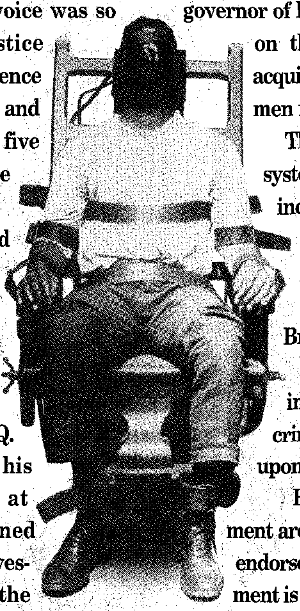
THANKS TO MODERN SCIENCE

17 INNOCENT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM DEATH ROW.

THANKS TO MODERN POLITICS

23 INNOCENT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE LIVING.

On April 15, 1999, Ronald Keith Williamson walked away from Oklahoma State Prison a free man. An innocent man. He had spent the last eleven years behind bars. "I did not rape or kill Debra Sue Carter," he would shout day and night from his death row cell. His voice was so torn and raspy from his pleas for justice that he could barely speak. DNA evidence would eventually end his nightmare and prove his innocence. He came within five days of being put to death for a crime he did not commit.



Williamson's plight is not an isolated one. Nor is it even unusual.

Anthony Porter also came within days of being executed. The state of Illinois halted his execution as it questioned whether or not Porter was mentally competent. Porter has an I.Q. of fifty-one. As the state questioned his competence, a journalism class at Northwestern University questioned his guilt. With a small amount of investigating, they managed to produce the real killer. After sixteen years on death row, Anthony Porter would find his freedom. He was lucky. He escaped with his life. A fate not shared by twenty-three other innocent men.

The Chicago Tribune, in its five-part series "Death Row justice derailed," pronounced, "Capital punishment in Illinois is a system so riddled with faulty evidence, unscrupulous trial tactics, and legal incompetence that justice has been forsaken." The governor of Illinois recently declared a moratorium on the death penalty after the state had acquired the dubious honor of releasing more men from death row than it had executed.

The unfairness that plagues the Illinois system also plagues every other state as well: incompetent lawyers, racial bias, and lack of access to DNA testing all inevitably lead to gross miscarriages of justice. As Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., stated, "Perhaps the bleakest fact of all is that the death penalty is imposed not only in a freakish and discriminatory manner, but also in some cases upon defendants who are actually innocent."

Even those who support capital punishment are finding it increasingly more difficult to endorse it in its current form. Capital punishment is a system that is deeply flawed – a system that preys on the poor and executes the innocent. It is a system that is fundamentally unjust and unfair. Please support our efforts to have a moratorium on further executions declared now. Support the ACLU.

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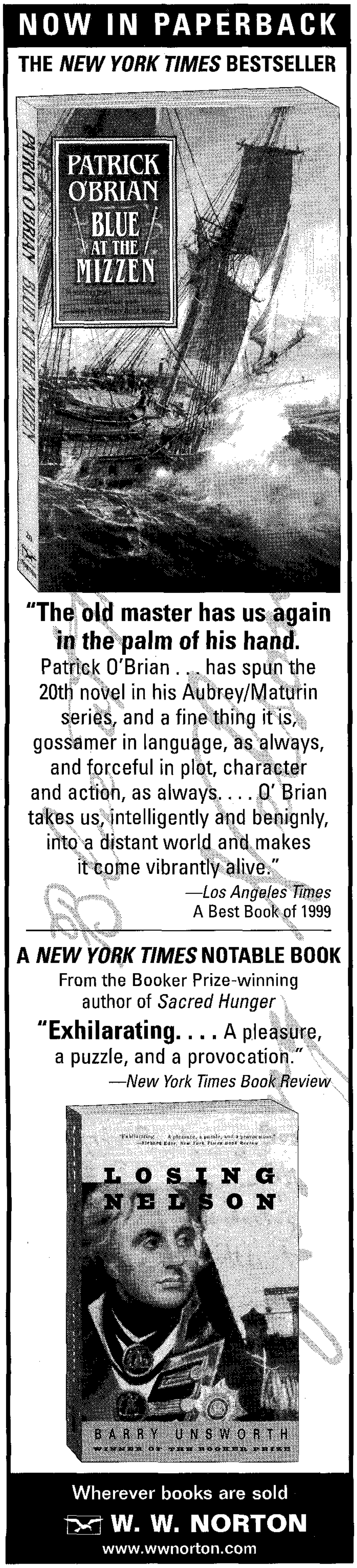

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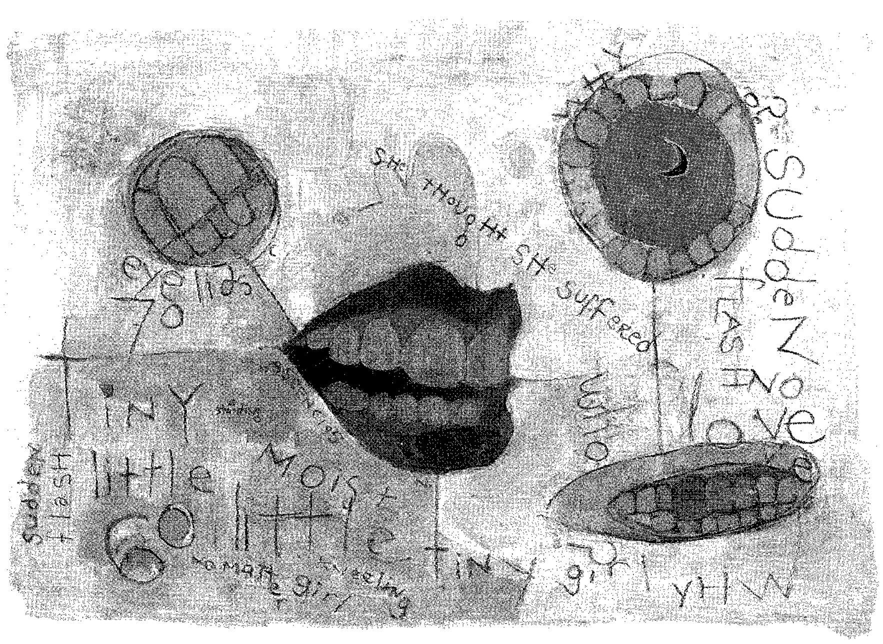
NURSE BETTY

A calm, sunny comedy from Neil LaBute, who is taking a break from the nastiness of previous work like "In the Company of Men." That was cinema as vivisection; this has its spasms of violence, but its target—disappointingly soft—is the delusion of ordinary folk. Betty (Renée Zellweger) is a wife and waitress who sees her husband (Aaron Eckhart, wiping out memories of his scruffy biker charm in "Erin Brockovich") murdered in their Kansas home. In blithe mental confusion, she sets off for Los Angeles, pursued by the killers (Morgan Freeman and Chris Rock), to find a fictitious doctor—the supergroomed hero of a television soap. He is merely an actor (Greg Kinnear) who can't decide how to handle the unwavering force of her credulity. Zellweger strolls and simpers through the story, while Freeman falls in love with her from afar. LaBute wants to inspect their uncomprehending obsessions, but the film feels too flimsy to bear much satirical weight.—*A.L.* (9/11/00) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Coronet Theatre, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE ORIGINAL KINGS OF COMEDY

Eager to escape the constraints of television, four black comics—Steve Harvey, D. L. Hughley, Cedric the Entertainer, and Bernie Mac—began touring around the country in 1997, and Spike Lee, using lightweight video cameras, caught their act last February in Charlotte, North Carolina. The results are pretty much sensational from start to finish: you feel the warmth of a live show and the pleasure the men take in shaping the evening. Steve Harvey can be scathing in a palms-down, slightly fey style of irritated disbelief—reminiscent, in this one respect, of Jack Benny. D. L. Hughley is small and querulous; he burns with the shrill exasperation of the put-upon male. Cedric the Entertainer does soft-bellied dance steps and offers candid imitations of ordinary folks. Bernie Mac, tall, handsome, stentorian, and fearless, says he's past his prime in bed; we don't believe him for a minute, but it's a gracious admission of mortality. Most of the jokes are about sex and family and work, and about shame, too—the humiliations too deep for ordinary people to admit. Among other things, the movie is a tender-dirty love song to women, who, Harvey says, have been scandalously neglected by the hip-hop performers.—*D.D.* (9/4/00) (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)



At the New York Film Festival, an adaptation of Samuel Beckett's "Not I," directed by Neil Jordan, with Julianne Moore (but just her mouth) reciting the play's monologue.

RAN

Set in the sixteenth century, Akira Kurosawa's 1985 epic spectacle, a variation on the theme of "King Lear," is static, but it deepens, and it has its own ornery splendor. It's a totally conceptualized work—perhaps the biggest piece of conceptual art ever made. For the first forty minutes or so, the picture is all preparation, and it seems dead, but then the preparation begins to pay off, and by the end the fastidiousness and the monumental scale of what Kurosawa has undertaken can flood you with admiration. The fine, harsh, percussive score is by Toru Takemitsu. In Japanese.—*P.K.* (Eastside Playhouse and Union Square.)

RIFIFI

A quartet of thieves breaks into a jewelry store, and for a tense half hour we watch as they work, silently. The film is like a highly skilled documentary on how to disconnect a burglar alarm and open a safe, and it is thoroughly engrossing, because we see the criminals as craftsmen, and we celebrate their teamwork, their finesse, their triumph. Ironically, we find ourselves sympathizing with their honest exhaustion after their dishonest labor. From there on, this 1955 movie, made in France, by the American director Jules Dassin, follows the tradition of "Scarface," "Public Enemy," and "The Asphalt Jungle" (and of "Macbeth" before them), bringing the tragic, trapped figures to a cadaverous finish. Along the way, Dassin keeps things actively vicious, with glimpses of underworld prostitutes and hopheads and a murder, a kidnapping, and the thrashing of a faithless mistress, who is stripped. "Rififi" is the granddaddy of a batch of suspense films featuring how to knock over safes or break into banks and museums, but its own chief distinction is its nasty tone. In French.—*P.K.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE TAO OF STEVE

Jenniphr Goodman's comedy is set in Santa Fe, which comes across as the capital city of slackerdom; apparently entire lives can be structured around the art of the Frisbee. Donal Logue plays Dex, the portly and lovable hero, as a kind of threatless John Belushi—no one is wary of him or his bulk, and women, in particular, are drawn to his bed in spite of themselves. Dex has a book-fed philosophy of successful seduction, although the movie never really shows us his technique in action. Instead, we get melting hearts as he discovers that the cool-spirited Syd (Greer Goodman) may just be the woman for him. The story strolls along with ease, picking its way carefully between the nerdish and the hip, and the soundtrack is a mem-

N. ASCENCIOS

orable breeze, yet you come out feeling strangely underwhelmed. When did the movies last produce a proper Casanova, with the courage of his addiction?—*A.L.* (8/7/00) (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, First & 62nd, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING
Directed by Philip Kaufman, this 1988 adaptation of Milan Kundera's novel is touching in sophisticated ways that you don't expect from an American director. A prankish sex comedy, it treats modern political events with a delicate—yet almost sly—sense of tragedy. It's the way the variations of jealousy and erotic attraction are played out by the three principal actors—an Englishman (Daniel Day-Lewis), a Swedish woman (Lena Olin), and a Frenchwoman (Juliette Binoche), all playing Czechs—which gives the movie its wonderfully unresolved texture. The story begins in Prague in 1968, during the period of freedom of expression and artistic flowering known as "socialism with a human face." Day-Lewis's Tomas is a hedonist, a womanizer, and an eminent young brain surgeon; Olin's Sabina, a painter who is his longtime sex partner, and Binoche's Tereza, whom he marries, represent the two poles of his life—lightness and weight. Kaufman has an exuberant temperament, and the spirit of the film is younger and looser than that of the book; a short two hours and fifty-three minutes, the picture has a whirling beauty. —*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Sept. 24.)

WHIPPED
Amanda Peet, who stole "The Whole Nine Yards" from an unbothered Bruce Willis, gets a lead role all to herself and won't let go. She plays Mia, a pleasure-hunting New Yorker, who causes three men—best friends, until she arrives on the scene—to fall in love with her simultaneously. Since the three essentially vie with one another to become the most objectionable, it is hard to work out what joy Mia finds in their company, apart from the satisfaction of watching the male ego, in conjunction with other organs, shrivel and shy away. The movie is a début for writer and director Peter M. Cohen, and he's desperate to cram in as much as possible; both camera and soundtrack collude with an air of leering panic, and there's never a dull moment, although there's never an interesting one either. The moral is that women have their own strong sexual agenda; the joke is that the movie quaintly presents this as breaking news.—*A.L.* (9/11/00) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

THE WIND WILL CARRY US
A beautiful but limited exercise in aesthetic formalism from the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami. An engineer from Teheran (Behzad Dourani) arrives in a small mountain village in order to record some sort of ritual that depends on the death of an old lady. But the old woman, whom we never see, refuses to die, and the engineer waits and waits and begins to question his life. He becomes friends with a little boy, and converses with a variety of people in town, some of whom are also out of sight. He drives again and again to a hilltop to get a clear signal for his cell phone so he can call Teheran and make small talk. The picture has a mournful, slow rhythm, rather like that of prayer or a stately ballad, and clearly Kiarostami is saying something about the value of putting down roots versus modern restlessness. But when life is simplified this way and then arranged into a pattern, it yields meaning without much struggle. However handsome the movie, one may feel the game has been rigged. In Farsi.—*D.D.* (8/14/00) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

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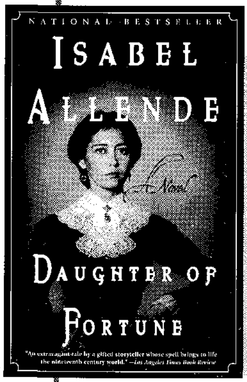

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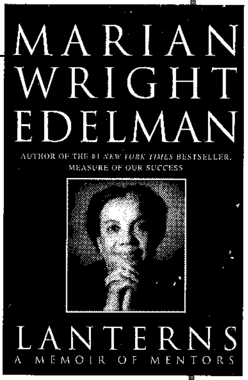
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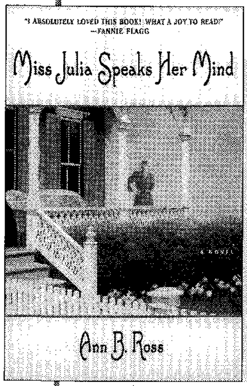
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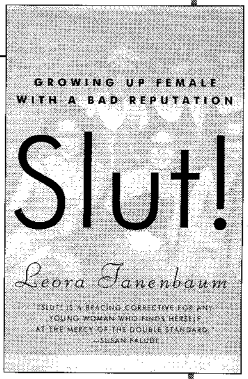
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POLA X
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THIS IS SPINAL TAP
Union Square.
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THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

Laurent Cantet's "Human Resources," with Jalil Lespert and Jean-Claude Vallod.

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REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Ride Lonesome: A Budd Boetticher Retrospective." Sept. 23 at 2: "Decision at Sundown" (†). ♦ Sept. 23 at 4: "Budd Boetticher: A Study in Determination" (1971, Taylor Hackford). ♦ Sept. 24 at 2: "The Man from the Alamo" (1953). ♦ Sept. 24 at 4: "My Kingdom For . . ." (1985). ♦ Classic movies. Sept. 23-24 at 6:30: "Belle de Jour" (1967, Luis Buñuel; in French).
ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Sept. 22-26 at 7 and 9: "Alma" (1998, Ruth Leitman).
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Sept. 20 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "One Week" (2000, Carl Seaton). ♦ Sept. 21 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "To Die For" (1995, Gus Van Sant). ♦ Sept. 22 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "What's Up, Doc?" (1972, Peter Bogdanovich). ♦ Sept. 23 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Just Heroes" (1987, John Woo; in Cantonese). ♦ Sept. 24 at 2, 5:30, and 9: "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" (†). ♦ Sept. 25 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Priest" (1994, Antonia Bird). ♦ Sept. 26: "Imitation of Life" (1959, Douglas Sirk).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Sept. 22-28: "House of Wax" (1953, André de Toth), a 3-D horror film starring Vincent Price, preceded by Bugs Bunny's only 3-D cartoon, "Lumber Jack-Rabbit" (1954, Chuck Jones).
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Sept. 29: "Oliver Stone, Filmmaker." Sept. 21 at 2:30: "The Doors" (1991). ♦ Sept. 21 at 6 and Sept. 26 at 2: "Nixon" (1995). ♦ Sept. 22 at 2: "JFK" (1991). ♦ Sept. 22 at 6 and Sept. 24 at 5: "Natural Born Killers" (1994). ♦ Sept. 22 at 8:15 and Sept. 23 at 12: "Platoon" (1986). ♦ Sept. 23 at 2:30 and Sept. 25 at 6: "Born on the Fourth of July" (†). ♦ Sept. 23 at 5:30 and Sept. 25 at 2:30: "Heaven and Earth" (1993). ♦ Sept. 24 at 2: "U-Turn" (1997). ♦ Sept. 26 at 6: "Any Given Sunday" (1999).
THE NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL
Lincoln Center (875-5050)—The festival runs from Sept. 22 to Oct. 9. Sept. 22 at 8:15 and 9: "Dancer in the Dark" (2000, Lars Von Trier). ♦ Sept. 23 at 3 and Sept. 25 at 6: "Chunhyang" (2000, Im Kwon-Taek; in Korean). ♦ Sept. 23 at 6 and Sept. 24 at 9:30: "Boesman and Lena" (2000, John Berry). ♦ Sept. 23 at 8:30 and Sept. 24 at 1:30: "The House of Mirth" (2000, Terence Davies). ♦ Sept. 24 at 7:15 and Sept. 25 at 9: "Krapp's Last Tape" (2000, Atom Egoyan) and "Not I" (2000, Neil Jordan). ♦ Sept. 26 at 6: "The Comedy of Innocence" (2000, Raul Ruiz; in French). ♦ Sept. 26 at 9: "The Circle" (2000, Jafar Panahi; in Farsi).
THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—Sept. 22-28: Episodes 7 and 8 of "The Decalogue" (†). ♦ Sept. 23-24 at 1: "The Saragossa Manuscript" (1965, Wojciech Has; in Polish). ♦ Sept. 22-23 at midnight: "The Fate of Lee Kahn" (1973, King Hu; in Mandarin).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Sept. 23-Oct. 6: "Passion & Defiance: Silent Divas of Italian Cinema." All films are accompanied by live music and have English intertitles. Sept. 24 at 3 and Sept. 26 at 6: "Assunta Spina" (1915, Gustavo Serena) and "Vedi Napule e Po' Mori" (1924, Eugenio Perego). ♦ Sept. 24 at 7:30: "Satanic Rhapsody" (1917, Nino Oxilia). ♦ Sept. 25 at 6: "Nobody's Child: Part One" (1921, Ubaldo Maria del Colle). ♦ Sept. 25 at 8:30: "Nobody's Child: Part Two" (1921, del Colle). ♦ Sept. 26 at 9:15: "Royal Tiger" (1916, Piero Fosco).

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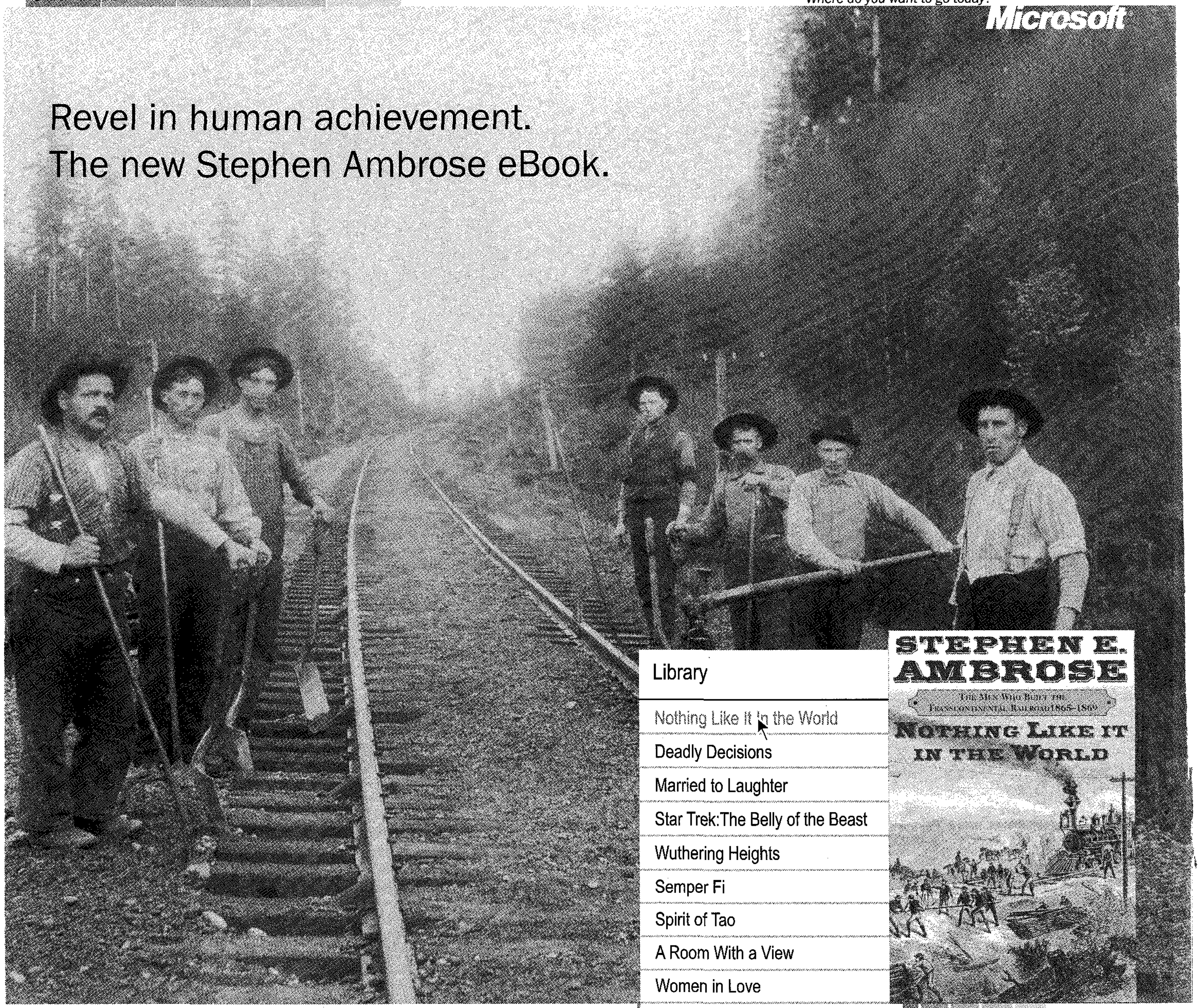

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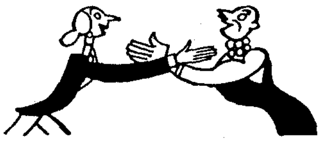
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

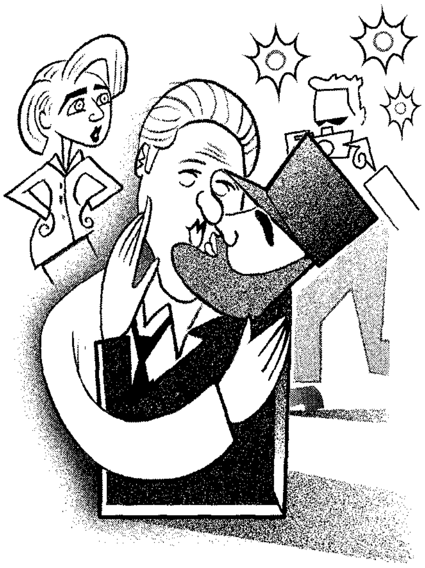
COMMENT
SHAKE, RATTLE, AND ROLL



There's an old adage that politics is a contact sport, by which is meant, first, that the game can get rough and, second, that if you want to play it you had better be prepared to shake a lot of hands and kiss a lot of cheeks (among other anatomical features), some of which may belong to persons you normally wouldn't touch with a barge pole. The current spate of local examples of both meanings began during the big traffic jam-cum-United Nations Millennium Summit the week before last, when, at a private diplomatic luncheon, President Clinton was bemused to find himself unexpectedly grasping a proffered hand topped by a mischievous smile encased in the hemisphere's most famous beard. It didn't take long for this enormity—which also involved a minute or two of unspecified chitchat—to become an "issue" in the New York Senate race. RICK RIPS BILL FOR CASTRO GREETING, went the headline in Saturday's *Post*. Flash:

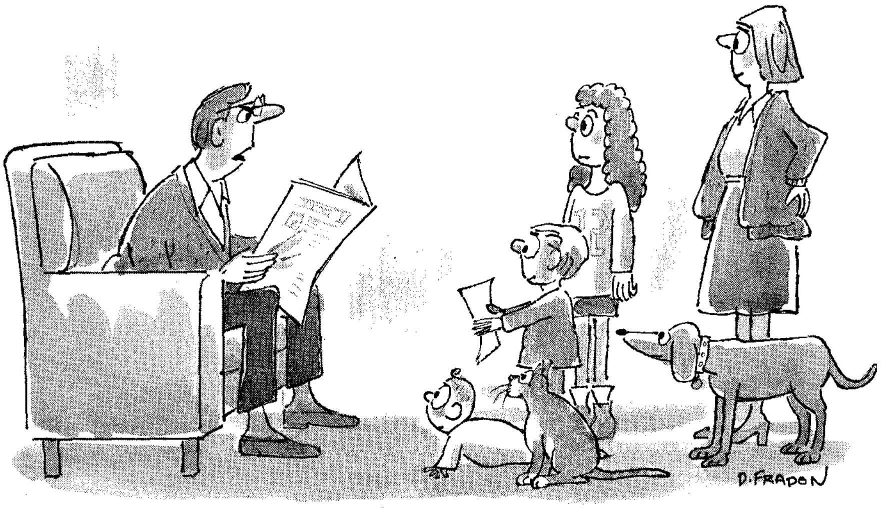
> GOP Senate hopeful Rick Lazio yesterday denounced President Clinton for shaking hands with Fidel Castro—saying it reminded him of when Hillary Rodham Clinton kissed Yasser Arafat's wife.
>
> "I think we send the wrong message when we embrace—whether it's Mrs. Arafat or Fidel Castro," Lazio said, referring to his Democratic rival's much-criticized hug and kiss of Suha Arafat last year after Arafat made an anti-Israel speech.

This attempt by Lazio (with the help of the fanatically anti-Hillary *Post*) to posit some sort of (Mrs.) Clinton–Castro–(Mrs.) Arafat daisy chain (with the Cuban jefe cast in the role of Lucky Fidel) was a weirdly parodistic echo of an earlier, actual threesome—the one on the White House lawn, seven years ago, where (Mr.) Clinton, looming with outstretched arms between (Mr.) Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin, more or less forced the P.L.O. leader and the Prime Minister of Israel to shake hands. The difference is that while (Mr.) Clinton's purpose was to ease tensions between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East, Lazio's was to foster tensions between (Mrs.) Clinton and Jews in the city of New York and its suburbs. Lazio has been trying for months to get mileage out of that quick peck between the First Ladies of the United States and the Palestinian proto-state. In doing so, he has been carrying on one of the most unsavory traditions of New York politics—the tradition of depicting one's opponents, generally in the face of considerable or even overwhelming evidence to the contrary, as enemies of the Jewish people and the State of Israel. (Al Gore got a harrowing introduction to this tradition back in 1988, when he was a tyro candidate making a practice run for the Democratic Presidential nomination. The future alpha male found himself being led bewilderedly around Brooklyn by his chief local supporter, then-Mayor Ed Koch, who had been saying, unhelpfully, that any Jewish New Yorker who voted for Jesse Jackson in the primary would have to be "crazy.")



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT RISKO

Lazio got his comeuppance the next day. The White House—acceding to a request from, of all newspapers, the *Post*—released a photograph, taken a year ago last December, of Mrs. Clinton's opponent shaking hands with Mrs. Arafat's husband. It's not just any old handshake, either. It's one of those overhand, arm-rassling, male-bonding "soul" handshakes, complete with Yasser gripping Rick's elbow and the two of them grinning like mad. The Lazio camp spent half of the week explaining why it was O.K. for Lazio to have slapped Arafat five but not O.K. for Mrs. Clinton to have exchanged ladies-who-lunch air kisses with her Palestinian op-



"No, I *don't* *want to know what my approval rating is."*

• •

posite number. Last Wednesday evening, at the first Hillary-Lazio debate, the subject didn't come up. But Lazio did shake hands with the First Lady, who is a known associate of Bill Clinton, a known associate of Fidel Castro. Maybe Lazio figured he had nothing to lose, now that he is a known associate of Yasser Arafat.

The political symbolism of public displays of affection has long been known to be treacherous, especially when Communists or other unsound elements are involved. Jimmy Carter learned that lesson the hard way; in 1979, at a signing ceremony for an arms-control treaty in Vienna, he and the Soviet leader of the era, the not very alluring Leonid Brezhnev, gave each other a great big hug. The resulting footage, spliced into a Ronald Reagan television commercial the following year, helped turn President Carter into former President Carter. A 1989 encounter between Brezhnev's final successor and Erich Honecker, the East German Party boss, had an even direr sequel, one that, in retrospect, put some observers in mind of the Mafia. Soon after a big wet one was planted on him by Mikhail Gorbachev, Honecker had the Wall pulled out from under him and was never heard from again. Handshakes can be freely dispensed, assuming you keep your story straight. When it comes to kisses, though, it's safer to stick to the spouse. And if the cameras are rolling, as the Gores can attest, so much the better.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

DEPT. OF HOOPLA

A SWELL PARTY ON SIXTY-SECOND STREET

In 1989, Jean-Paul Goude designed France's spectacular bicentennial celebration—the "planet's tribes," represented by an American marching band doing the moonwalk, Scottish bagpipers hooting in a downpour of artificial rain, Africans riding zebra-striped ponies, and Jessye Norman singing the "Marseillaise"—and you might say that the experience has spoiled him for more modest endeavors. "With the bicentennial, they said, 'You want the Champs-Élysées? You got the Champs-Élysées,' " Goude said recently in New York. "It's not like that here."

Here, specifically, is Sixty-second Street between Madison and Park Avenues, where next week the new Hermès flagship store will open with a Goude-designed block party. Goude is France's most famous adman turned cultural titan. Last week, though, he was haggling with city officials over the proportions of his extravaganza, and over some unsightly repair work on a neighboring building. "They will not take the scaffolding down," Goude said with irritation, although he acknowledged that falling cornices would probably spoil the entertainment, which will include a group of French hunting-horn players, a troupe of Russian dancers, and an Iranian singer dressed up as a traditional androgynous Indian performer. "It will celebrate the marriage of cultures," Goude said. "It is a celebration of what is happening in New York."

Well, yes; but it's easy to understand why city officials didn't see it that way, especially when Goude presented them with a plan for a thirty-foot-high tower, constructed of oversized orange Hermès boxes. (The tower will now rise only twenty-four feet.) "Because Hermès was originally a saddler, at first I wanted to block the street off with mounted police horses, and have a sort of horse ballet," Goude said. "But then I thought of images of riots, with police on horseback, and I thought of the poop everywhere, and it didn't seem very elegant. So then I thought of the orange boxes, and out of the boxes pop the dancers and musicians."

Goude, who has an American mother, spent the seventies in New York, as the art director of *Esquire*. The Hermès opening will be his first New York production since the mid-eighties, when he staged a fashion show for Azzedine Alaïa. Goude is an eighties kind of guy—he is best known for being the imagemaker behind Grace Jones. He was the one who put her in that dark-blue makeup and purple lipstick and created her squared-off haircut. "I remember cutting it for the first time," he said. "I had that feeling—you know, when your ears get hot—that it was something important. Every black person on the planet had hair cut like her. I take great pride in that."

Goude will be sixty later this year, and he looks boyish in the grizzled, monkey-glandular way that Warren Beatty does. He used to wear shoulder pads in his T-shirts, in order to enhance his muscularity, and he favors drawstring pants that skim his ankles—a visual trick that makes him look a bit taller and also slightly silly. Silliness is Goude's métier, and it has served him well, although he yearns for larger things. He has spent much of the past ten years in an abortive effort to make a movie based on his life, including his relationship with Jones, with whom he has a twenty-year-old son. "The big adventure of my life was Grace," Goude said. "It was Pygmalion in reverse. I fell in love with a real person and I tried to make her into a statue. But how long can someone hold a pose? As long as they are still in love with you, and then they will run away. And with her ran away my masterpiece, and I was left like an idiot. It was a very beautiful story."

Less beautiful are the legal wrangles between Goude and the longtime producer of his film project. ("It's a very sore point," he said.) With a new young family to support, Goude has returned to the familiar territory of fluffiness; hence the Hermès party. "There are a lot of parties I compare to puddings, that are very heavy," Goude said. "Ours is very light—it is a soufflé. But it takes a lot of preparation to be light."

—*Rebecca Mead*

DEPT. OF FLEETING FAME

THE FAKE SLIM SHADYS

A few weeks ago, near the tank-top display at Bang Bang, a clothing store on Eighth Avenue in Chelsea, a gloomy-looking man named Shane approached me and asked whether I wanted to earn some money. This is what I'd have to do: bleach my hair, buy white sneakers, put on a white T-shirt and a baggy pair of jeans, then show up at Radio City Music Hall to appear as one of a hundred Slim Shady impersonators during Eminem's live performance of his hit single "The Real Slim Shady," at the MTV Video Music Awards. To be recognized as someone capable of looking even remotely like Eminem, the dyspeptic white rapper whose alter ego, Slim Shady, says all kinds of horrible things, was quite exciting. How could I say no?

So, on the day before the show, I arrived at Radio City for rehearsal. Dozens of other young white recruits with bleached hair waited on the sidewalk, like draftees in some Scandinavian navy. They were making calls on their cellular phones. ("Tomorrow night I'm going to be on MTV at 9:26 P.M. Tell as many people as you can at Hofstra!") We went inside and filled out our tax forms. (Each of us earned eighty dollars.) Then a huge black man wearing yellow-tinted sunglasses pointed at his shaved head and said, "Follow the shine." He led us past a throng of midgets, who had been hired to high-kick like the Rockettes during the awards program's closing number, and into what looked like the Rockettes' rehearsal studio. We were greeted by our choreographer, Danielle, who was dressed in a tight, low-cut turquoise top (and who, on the day of the show, sported a hot-pink belly-baring T-shirt studded with rhinestone letters that read "FUCK ME I'M FAMOUS"). Danielle explained that the show's producers had envisioned a platoon of generic blond men who would nod along with Eminem once he started rapping outside the hall, on Sixth Avenue. Then we'd march into the theatre behind him, streaming through the aisles as he ascended the stage alone. "You're kind of, like, his boys," Danielle said. "Just bop your heads and look bored." She put on a tape of "The Real Slim Shady," and we practiced bopping our heads. Danielle was not satisfied. "I don't want to say you should be robotic," she said. "But you're an army of Eminems. No hand gestures. No looking at the camera. I need you to look bored." A Slim Shady near the back raised both middle fingers and waved them wildly at her. She turned away, exasperated, like a big sister. "What do you expect when you hire so many smart-asses?" one blond guy muttered.

Later that evening, Slim Shady himself joined us on Sixth Avenue for a run-through. He was handed a plastic water bottle to rap into, instead of a microphone. "MTV bettter get it together!" he yelled. "I'm fuckin' doin' a live show here, and I got a goddam water bottle for a mike!" It was becoming clear that some of us were destined to stand completely off camera. My television dreams were melting away. "If they ask me to do this ever again, I'm telling them no," said a Slim Shady standing near me.

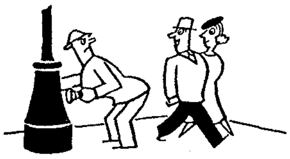
Call time the next day, the day of the big show, was 11 A.M. For most of the afternoon, we flopped on the floor of the penthouse solarium at the Women's National Republican Club, on Fifty-first Street, while the producers re-dyed our hair and fed us pretzels. Kurt Loder walked by. A contingent of Slim Shadys decided to look for a place to smoke dope on the Republicans' terrace. A clutch of women peered down at the rest of us from the windows of an office building across the street. Eventually, a few of them were persuaded to flash their bras. One tan woman exposed her midriff. Another taped a sign to the window: "Who's the real Slim Shady?"

Six hours later, America learned, unequivocally, that it wasn't one of us. Rapping for the cameras, Eminem—wearing a tank top—led us into the theatre. Everybody in the hall watched him romp onto the stage, while we, in our baggy T-shirts, got funnelled out through the emergency exits and deposited on the street, where it suddenly seemed very quiet.

—*Craig Kellogg*

TURKISH LETTERS

A FAN'S NOTE



Toward the end of August, mysterious handwritten flyers started showing up on lampposts in Park Slope, Brooklyn. "To Mr. PAUL AUSTER," the flyers read. "I have been wandering up and down the Park Slope, with a pack of Turkish cigars I brought over for you, expecting to run into you. But it seems that this method isn't going to work. So, if you read this message, could you please contact me from engtur@hotmail.com, even if you don't wish to accept my humble gift. Thanks, E. Türkgeldi."

The note was the work of one Engin Türkgeldi, a twenty-year-old medical student and aspiring writer who came to New York for the summer to visit his brother—and to track down Auster, the novelist, who lives in Park Slope. "I dreamed of meeting him somehow," Türkgeldi explained recently, in hurried English. He has long brown hair, olive skin, and smoky, deep-set eyes. "I didn't imagine a long conversation, but maybe just I would run into him, tell him I was from Turkey, thank him, and hand him some cigars. And that would be enough for me!"

Türkgeldi arrived in mid-July and, guessing that Auster was out of town, bided his time. "I knew he went to VAIR-mun," Türkgeldi said. "He's always talked about this VAIR-mun place." (A pause. "V-e-r-m-o-n-t," he explained.)

At the end of August, Türkgeldi began searching for Auster on foot. He took a picture of the corner of Seventh Avenue and Third Street, the fictional location of

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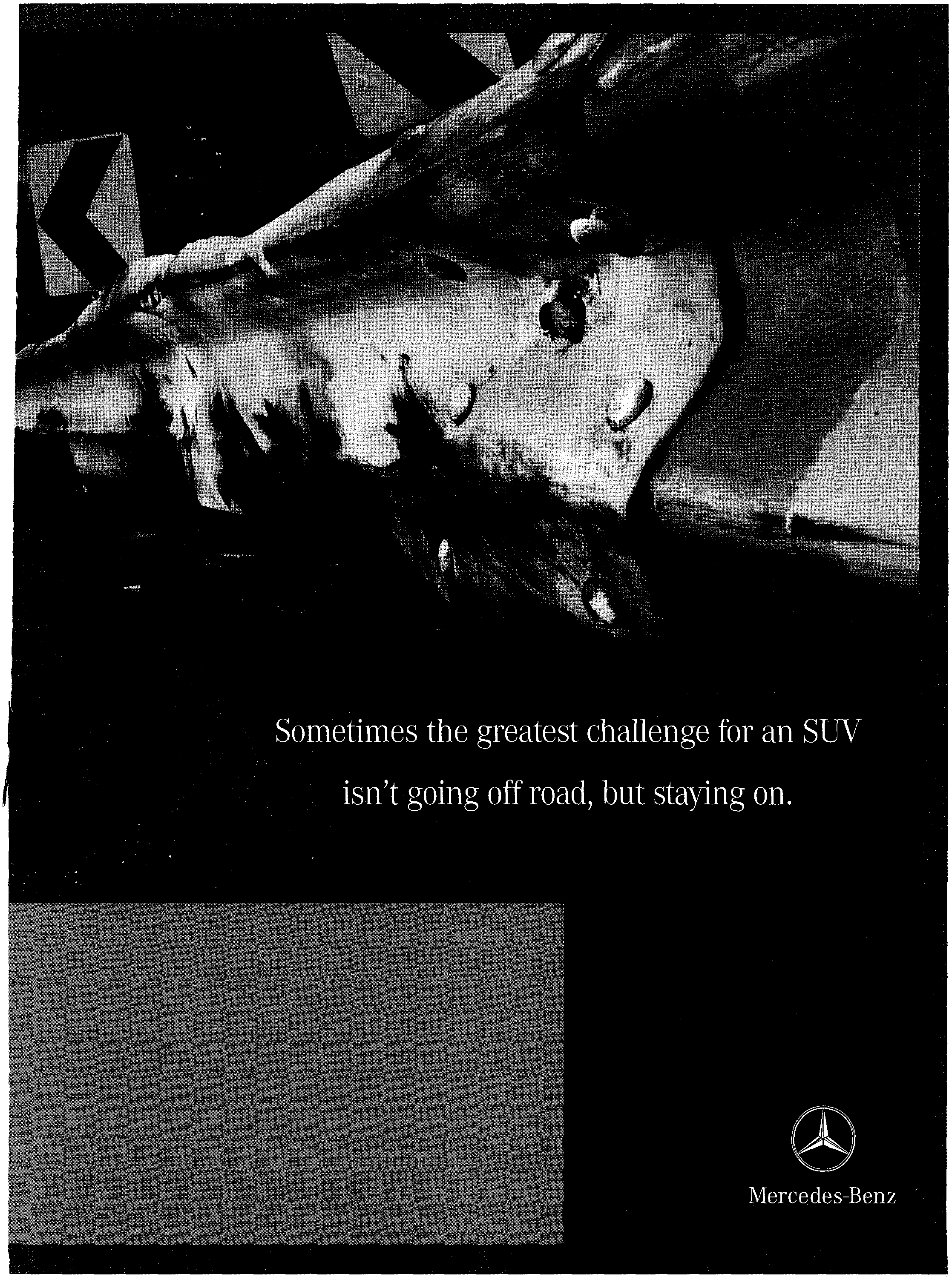
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the cigar shop in the film "Smoke," which Auster wrote; he wandered down as far as Sixteenth Street, where the movie was filmed; and he humped it all the way back to Flatbush Avenue, a thirty-five-block trek. He walked this circuit for two days straight. "It's not really clear that you can just take a cigar and expect to run into somebody you're looking for," he said. "But I just felt like, maybe, a Paul Auster character. I just expected"—as any loyal Auster reader would—"that some coincidence would happen."

But it soon became clear to Türkgeldi that the real Brooklyn wasn't like the Brooklyn in a Paul Auster book. "I started getting hopeless," he said. That's when he came up with the idea of putting his letter on lampposts. After a few days, Auster noticed them and was intrigued. Lacking an E-mail address of his own ("I just don't want to be in touch with everyone so closely," he said), he stopped in at Park Slope's Community Book Store and asked the store to E-mail Türkgeldi with a request that the cigars be left for him there. As soon as Türkgeldi got the message, he dropped off the cigars, along with a letter.

Auster said, from his home, "What I admired about the way he approached me was the discretion of it, respecting the shyness of a writer, and making a very kind gesture at the same time. That's why I answered him—in my own quiet way. I hope we'll continue to keep a correspondence going."

Paul Auster

Türkgeldi understands this shyness. In the past year, he submitted five stories to a respected Turkish literary magazine (and got one published), but he doesn't want anyone to know about it. "Nobody in my family knows," he said over the phone. "I told only people who won't laugh. I'm just doing this in conspiracy. I mean, I write at night." He lowered his voice. His brother was in the next room. "He thinks I'm talking to a friend in Washington, D.C." He asked me not to reveal his secret. "I'm not ready yet," he whispered.

—*Rick Perlstein*

POSTCARD FROM MISSOULA AFTER THE FIRES

It has been raining since the beginning of Labor Day weekend, and the wildfires that once surrounded us are, for all purposes, past tense. Most of the twelve thousand firefighters and support personnel have left, or are about to. The twenty per cent of Montana that was briefly closed to recreational and nonresident use has for the most part been reopened. Hunters, who were standing toe to toe with a bloodless fall, are breathing easy, merrily rearming, sighting up.

We were—the local and national media led us to believe—living in a kiln of death: the fires were infernos. They sent dragons' tongues of flame skyward. They didn't burn, they raged, leaped, galloped. They didn't grow, they exploded (or, weirdly, as one commentator put it, snowballed). There wasn't damage; there was devastation.

In reality, for most western Montanans fire wasn't the problem; smoke was. We weren't experiencing a tragedy so much as an inconvenience. The whole thing was less hellish than heckish. Living in Missoula this summer was like being trapped in a Myrtle Beach motel room by rains from a hurricane off the Louisiana coast.

Montana, for the record, was not aflame. *Parts* of Montana were aflame. The place is honkingly big, roughly the combined size of New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. As of Labor Day, about one per cent of the state had burned.

Whatever the image of Montanans is out there in the world, we are, finally, just a bunch of everyday people, a little behind most cultural curves, perhaps (generally, the only thing that arrives here before it does anywhere else is winter), who fish, golf, swim, jog, hike, have picnics, play softball and soccer, and read books and magazines in back-yard chaise longues on summer evenings. But we couldn't do any of these things with any regularity this summer.

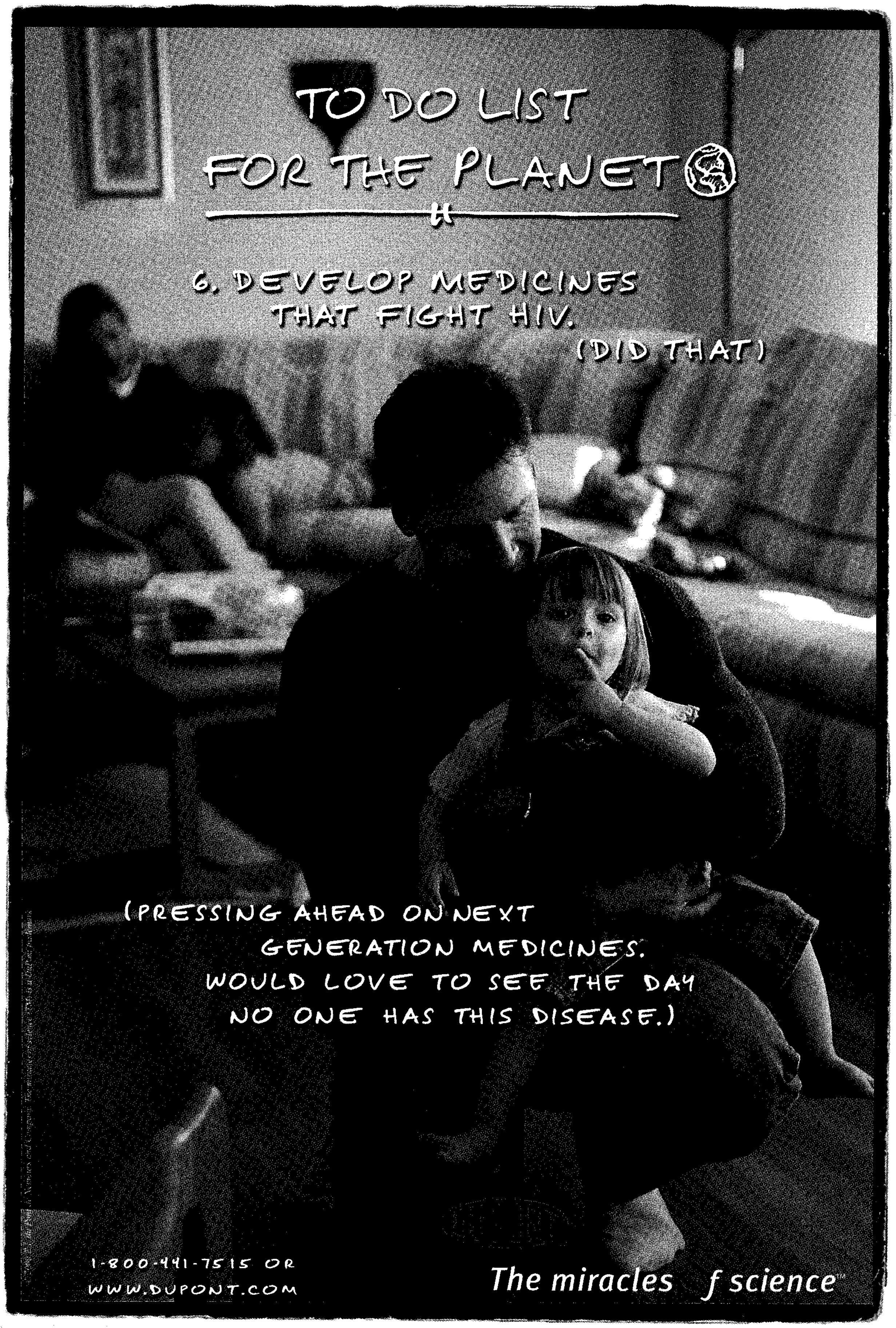
Usually, the summer sky here is irrefutably grand—high, huge, and as blue as a new balloon. Not this year. In the greater Missoula valley, officials called seventeen air-quality alerts in August alone. At its worst—days when streetlights blinked on in midafternoon—it was chewable. The hills outside of town disappeared. The house at the end of the next block disappeared. Joggers, oddly, kept at it, wearing surgical masks, looking a bit ridiculous.

There's an old joke here that we have only two seasons: winter and visitors. And for people with visitors this August? Well, it was a hostage situation. It was sad: hosts with thousand-yard stares leading their bored charges across mall parking lots, along the streets of downtown, searching for respite after days of board games, cards, television, and cabin-fever squabbling (activities Montanans usually save for winter). The groups shuffled past stores offering chainsaw-sculpture bears, huckleberry chocolates and jams—on the way, perhaps, to a meal of nondescript steak, subpar Chinese, subpar Italian, and sub-subpar delicatessen—accompanied, perhaps, by flagons of alcohol, which, with luck, would bring an early end to another interminable day.

Some visitors took this in stride. Others seemed to view the state as some kind of buyers' club, a semi-convenient provider of experiences of a lifetime. And when it didn't provide—when it got sullen, refused to put out—they felt cheated.

We remembered another local drama: the eruption of Mt. St. Helens twenty years ago. It came quickly on a warm May evening, a coal-black cloud as big as a continent. It stayed—a monsoon of exotic, possibly dangerous, ash—for a few days. Then it left, washed away by torrents of old-fashioned rain. We swept off the volcano's dust, shook our heads, and got back to summer. That, we now know, is how a proper disaster should behave.

—*Bryan DiSalvatore*



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THE CAMPAIGN FIREWORKS?

The crowd in Cincinnati last Tuesday was enthusiastic but minuscule by Presidential-campaign standards. There were perhaps a thousand people gathered in a corner of a vast parking lot, most of them students or trade-union members. They waited through rain showers and then cheered on cue, waving identical blue “Gore 2000” placards, as a yellow school bus rolled up and disgorged the Democratic Party’s candidates for President and Vice-President, who seem to have travelled in every possible means of conveyance but missile and hot-air balloon this past month.

Despite his recent triumphs, Al Gore is still uncomfortable on the stump. After his brisk, conversational Convention speech, he has returned to his lugubrious and, at times, condescending norm. Gore’s speech in Cincinnati was a listless recitation of policy nostrums, building toward a flaccid peroration: “I want to ask for one thing more,” he said, although he hadn’t asked the crowd for anything interesting, only their votes. “I want you to open your hearts and believe, genuinely, that we can do the right thing in this country.” Fireworks followed, improbably. (As it happened, the performance was being filmed for a Gore campaign commercial.)

Gore doesn’t have to do much more than show up these days. This Presidential campaign is in the process of being lost, not won. Indeed, Gore would have been foolish to make news in Cincinnati: George W. Bush was ensnared in yet another silly crisis, fending off inquiries about one of his campaign ads, an attack on Gore’s prescription-drug proposal for senior citizens, in which the word “rats” (as in “bureaucrats”) seemed to flash subliminally. This was probably more of a prank by Alex Castellanos, who produced the ad and is known for his combativeness, than a nefarious effort to brainwash voters, but its puerility reinforced the not altogether subliminal message that George W. Bush is a less than serious candidate.

There has been a Freudian quality to the recent Bush bungles. Both the “rats” controversy and Bush’s inadvertent open-mike derogation of a reporter (as a “major-league asshole”) are niggling non-events, but they seem almost too perfectly feckless to be unintentional—emanations from a former fraternity president’s subconscious, perhaps, or the work of some cosmic political consultant intent on broadcasting Bush’s alleged gravitational deficiencies to the widest possible audience at the worst possible time. Two weeks in a row as the subject of Leno and Letterman monologues! There is no precedent for this in a general-election campaign. There may be no recovery from it, either, without a violent “lurch” in the campaign dynamic.

It isn’t easy to manufacture a lurch in a quiet political season, but the Gore campaign offered a fat, if unexploited, target last week. There was a vampiric duality to Gore’s schedule. By day, he was the picture of worthiness—the theme of the week was education, and he was a constant presence in public-school classrooms. By night, though, Gore sluiced new blood into his campaign treasury through a series of million-dollar fund-raising concerts in Boston, New York, and Camden, New Jersey. The entertainment for these events was organized by the same sort of executives that Gore and his running mate, Joseph Lieberman, had attacked a few days earlier for promoting “R-rated” movies to underage audiences. And there was additional news of Clinton-Gore campaign-finance squalor: another Justice Department investigation, this one exploring Gore’s alleged 1995 effort to dun trial lawyers as a quid pro quo for the Clinton Administration’s opposition to tort-reform legislation. Once again, Gore’s behavior probably skimmed the outskirts of acceptable practice, but there is a blithe hypocrisy to his antic buckraking while belatedly calling for campaign-finance reform.

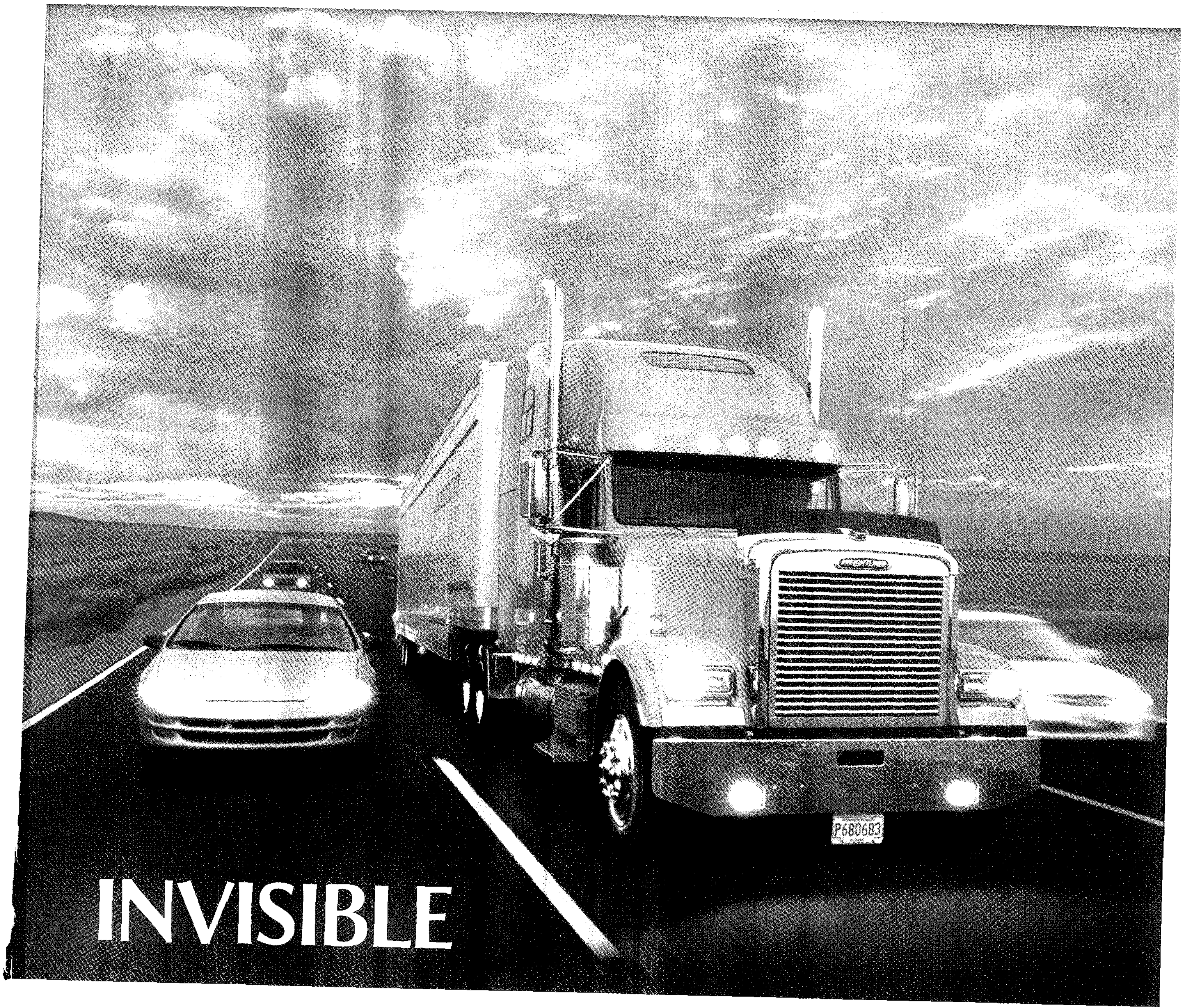
BARRY BLITT

During the Republican primaries last winter, Senator John McCain insisted that campaign-finance abuse was the portal through which an attack could be launched against the larger ethical questions raised by the Clinton Presidency. “When I’m in a debate with Al Gore, I’m going to . . . say, ‘You and Bill Clinton debased the institutions of government . . . and then you said there was “no controlling legal authority,”’” McCain argued in a New Hampshire primary debate against Bush. “George, when you’re in that debate, you’re going to stand there and you’ll have nothing to say, because you’re defending the system.”

Last week, McCain was back—bandaged, after cancer surgery, but still unbowed—and seething, in charge of a Senate Commerce Committee hearing on the entertainment industry’s marketing practices. Joe Lieberman made an appearance, testifying against the industry, but he wasn’t asked to defend the Gore campaign’s pursuit of Hollywood money. (In fact, McCain was photographed embracing Lieberman.) It was left to Lynne Cheney, the wife of the Republican Vice-Presidential nominee, to make the case against the Democrats.

A more supple Republican campaign might have sent its nominee to Washington to throttle the entertainment industry and the Democrats, and, perhaps, to force Gore onto the defensive. But George W. Bush spent the day wandering the Pacific Northwest—he was photographed by the *Times* standing in a fog—lamenting the plight of the salmon and the condition of the national parks. “Under this Administration, the parks are in worse shape than ever before,” he announced, reading from a teleprompter in the midst of the wilderness.

—*Joe Klein*



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U.S. JOURNAL

GOD AND FOOTBALL

The fight to keep prayer in the stadium.

BY MARK SINGER

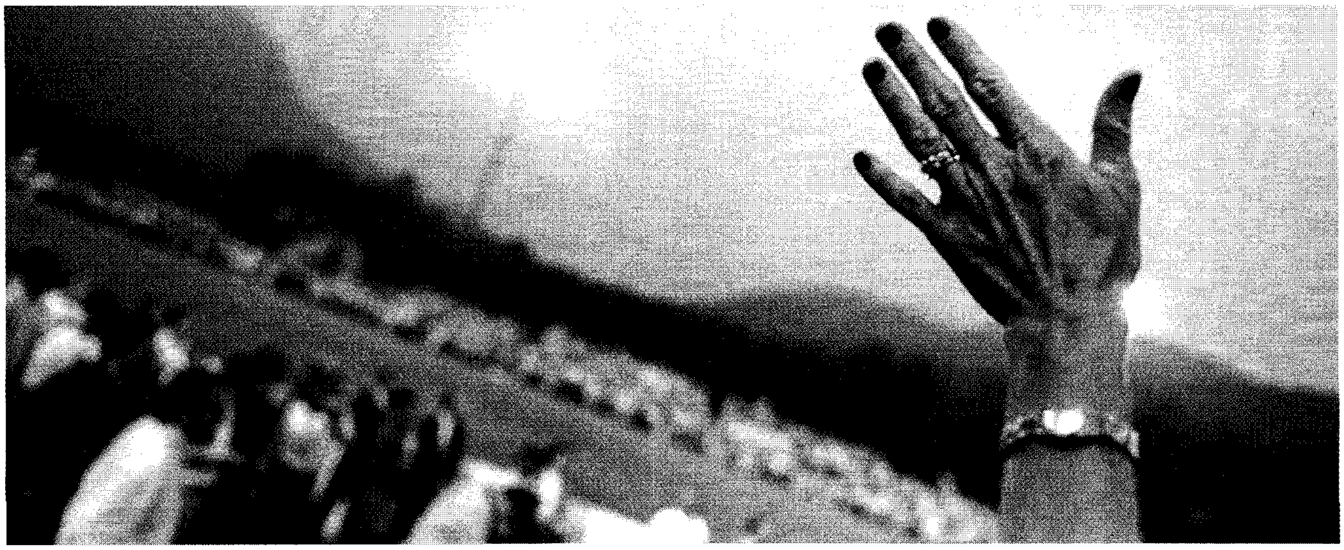
ASHEVILLE, N.C.

Given the inordinate number of houses of worship in Buncombe County, North Carolina (pop. 200,000), and its county seat, Asheville (pop. 68,000), disagreements inevitably arise—even over such nondoctrinal matters as, say, how many houses of worship there are in Buncombe County. "Well, I'm sure we have as many churches as we do restaurants," the Reverend Buddy Corbin, of the Calvary Baptist Church, estimated when I put the question to him not long ago. A couple of days later, hoping for a bit more precision, I queried Rabbi Robert Ratner, of Congregation Beth HaTephila, who refrained from the Talmudic option of answering my question with a question but still wasn't very specific. "Bazillions," he said. I mentioned Reverend Corbin's yardstick, and Rabbi Ratner shook his head. "There are a *lot* more churches in Asheville than restaurants," he assured me. "And that includes the fast-food places."

One recent afternoon in Asheville, where I'd gone to explore the debate over the relative merits of "spontaneous prayer" before high-school football games, I was waiting in my motel room for a return phone call from Leni Sitnick, the mayor—a call that I'd correctly begun to suspect was never going to materialize—when I became engrossed in the phone book, my only bedside reading other than a Gideon Bible. As I surveyed the church listings in the Yellow Pages, I briefly considered compiling a list of denominational subgroups, then decided this was a pointless exercise. It wasn't just a matter of sorting through the various Baptists. Where would a downtown establishment like The Body of Christ in Asheville: A House of Prayer, A Center for Worship (two doors from Instant Karma Body Piercing) fit in? And how could I arrive at an accurate census if there was no phone listing for the Radical Faeries, a collective of homosexual pagans, or for the local adherents of Meher Baba or Sufism or for the dozen or so Wiccan covens whose members have erected sanctuaries amid the timbered slopes of the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains that surround Asheville?

From a chamber-of-commerce point of view, Asheville has evolved during the past decade in progressive and desirable ways, a fact that's reflected in the regularity with which publications as diverse as *Outside* and *Modern Maturity* and *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* extoll its attractiveness as a recreation, retirement, and over-all quality-of-life destination. The chamber-of-commerce people don't necessarily brag when *Rolling Stone* and certain alternative media anoint Asheville "America's New Freak Capital" or "the San Francisco of the East." Nevertheless, it's obvious that the downtown mix of New Age herbalist shops, organic bakeries, and tattoo parlors, along with a gentrified array of coffeehouses, wine bars, art galleries, antique shops, and restaurants, has enhanced the general business climate. A topic the boosters prefer to avoid is the chronic ozone that clouds the viewscape, making it a challenge to imagine how, a century ago, tuberculosis sufferers flocked to the mountains of western North Carolina.

Beyond the Asheville city limits, Buncombe County gets rural very quickly, and a substantial portion of its populace consists of people who draw comfort from the notion that they reside, as the apt cliché goes, in the buckle of the Bible Belt—a designation that still applies to any number of enclaves where the Old South resists efforts to reconstitute it as the New South. For these citizens, the smog is a handy metaphor for that New South and for the pestilence of secular culture in general, a visual reminder of the hazard to one's well-being posed by the noxious influences of "pluralism" and "diversity." A lot of Asheville preachers have been delivering sermons lately in which the metaphors have grown more urgent, reflecting a siege mentality, the only proper



"Thank you in the end zones. Thank you on the outside. Thank you, Lord Jesus." Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

response, as they see it, when powerful external forces pose a threat to personal freedom—specifically, the freedom of Christian evangelicals to pray whenever, wherever, and however they please.

The Reverend Emile Wolfaardt, a South African émigré who a couple of years ago found his way to Asheville and the pulpit of the Bent Creek Baptist Church—guided, he says, by a crystal-clear divine directive—awoke one day in June of this year with what he recalls as "an incredible burden, a heaviness in my heart." When he arrived at his office after an early-morning prayer meeting and realized he still didn't feel better, he sat at his desk and asked God what to do. There wasn't an audible response, but the next thing Reverend Wolfaardt knew he had written "We Still Pray" on a piece of paper, "because God visited that phrase in my heart." Evidently, God was as disturbed as Reverend Wolfaardt by news that the United States Supreme Court, in a Texas case called Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe, had found that student-led prayers before high-school football games violated the principle of church-state separation.

The landmark opinion that outlawed officially organized prayer in public schools was rendered in 1962, and in the years since the Supreme Court has been regularly petitioned to hear cases seeking reinterpretations. Until Santa Fe v. Doe came along, the most recent significant precedent was a 1992 ruling that barred clergymen from leading benedictions at public-school graduation ceremonies. Meanwhile, somehow—perhaps owing to the sacrosanct nature of high-school football—the widespread ritual of having "student chaplains" deliver pregame prayers over public-address systems has flourished beneath the radar.

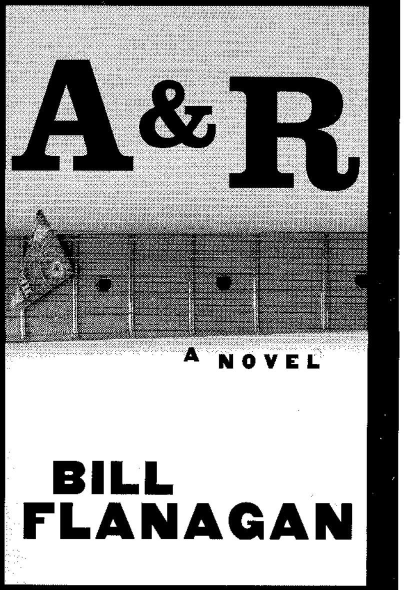
The day after the announcement of the Santa Fe v. Doe decision, the Buncombe County superintendent of schools dispatched a memo apprising employees of the need to follow the law. A report in the Asheville *Citizen-Times*, headlined "STUDENT-LED PRAYER WON'T BE TOLERATED," was followed two days later by an editorial applauding the high-court ruling. Evangelicals and fundamentalists, however, had a different reaction: if organized prayer wouldn't be tolerated, that amounted to religious intolerance, which in turn implied a grave threat to religious freedom. It was thoughts along those lines that weighed upon Reverend Wolfaardt, and as he started talking with like-minded members of the cloth, he discovered that several were prepared to take action.

One such activist was the Reverend Ralph Sexton, Jr., the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church and a high-profile figure locally. "We're arguing this as a liberties issue," Reverend Sexton told me when I went to see him one morning in mid-August. By then, a lot had happened in Asheville. Most notably, the phrase "We Still Pray" had been taken up as a call to arms. It had found its way into an op-ed essay, "The Myth of Separation," that Reverend Sexton published in the *Citizen-Times;* it was the name of a newly chartered nonprofit corporation with its own office and Web site; and it had become the theme of an upcoming rally at a high-school football stadium, the primary purpose of which was to instruct the devoted in Supreme Court-subverting techniques for spontaneous prayer.

This was something I was eager to witness. With the rally only two days away, Reverend Sexton, a youthful-looking fifty-three-year-old who wore braided brown leather suspenders and a suit, shirt, tie, socks, and shoes in matching tones of cream and beige, was in a state of acute readiness. Before he became a Baptist preacher, he ran a vending-machine business. He had a salesman's affability and wanted to introduce me to an innovative product the "We Still Pray" folks were promoting: a constitutional amendment—one that had already been referred to the House Judiciary Committee—to the effect that "neither the United States nor any state shall establish any official religion, but the people's right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed." When Reverend Sexton spoke of organized prayer before football games as a liberties issue, he meant that it should be protected by the First Amendment. That this line of reasoning had already been rejected by the Supreme Court in Santa Fe v. Doe didn't daunt him a bit. A new constitutional amendment could handle that problem.

It was inconvenient, of course, that an amendment would be needed to accomplish what, according to Reverend

ROCK STARS & CRITICS AGREE



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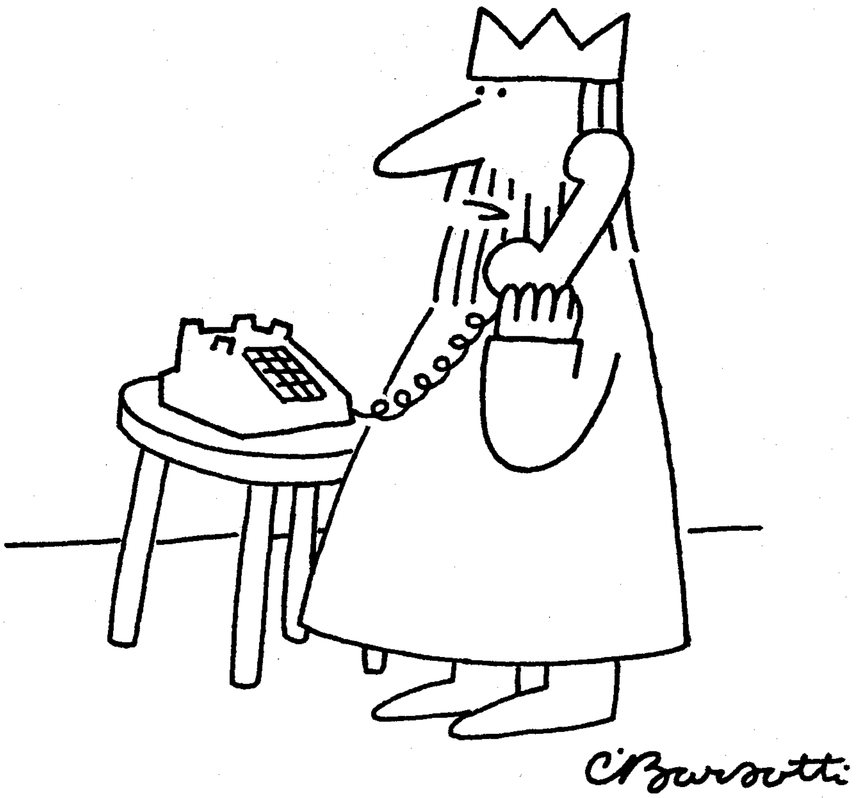


"No, thank you, I already have a moat."

Sexton's reading of constitutional history, the framers had intended in the first place: "that the church would be a moral influence; the Founding Fathers really intended for God to be in the government, but they didn't intend for the government to be in the church." It was also inconvenient that a constitutional amendment couldn't be ratified in time for the start of football season, which was less than two weeks away. The mechanism Reverend Sexton had in mind as a short-term solution—spontaneous prayer, most likely in the form of an unannounced segue from the national anthem to the Lord's Prayer—hinged upon the assumption that no fair-minded person would regard it as an unwelcome imposition.

"Bible believers—I'm almost hesitant to use the word 'Christians,' because in the Jewish community it's so often misunderstood—are tolerant people," he said. "Because if I love God with all my heart then I'm going to love you as a human being and I'm going to allow you to be what you feel you need to be. Because I have morality. I have knowledge of right and wrong. I'm not going to pass a law to make you be me. If people in the crowd at a football game want to say a prayer, we're not advocating that everyone has to say the prayer. We're talking about spontaneous prayer. If it's not in your heart, it's meaningless, anyway.

"I'll give you a hypothetical situation. We're at a football game, you and I, and we happen to be seated on either side of Joe and Mary"—a couple of names he pulled out of the air—"and we don't go to church. I'm a Muslim and you're a Buddhist. We're going to listen to them say a prayer but not say it ourselves. In my opinion, Joe and Mary are not going to be intolerant of us for not praying. Is their prayer not a gentle reminder that there are people of faith and this is a community that is kind and God-conscious?"

Well, maybe, though as Reverend Sexton himself told me, "There are some people who aren't behind us, and I look forward to dialoguing with them." For instance, Reverend Joe Yelton, of the Hominy Baptist Church, told me he viewed a prayer gathering in a football stadium as "a Rambo style of theology in which what I believe I'm going to work hard to make you believe, which is antithetical to everything Christ represented, who told us to speak with quiet voices."

I went to do a little dialoguing of my own with another contrarian, Reverend Buddy Corbin, whose congregation, Calvary Baptist, occupies a large white-columned red brick building in a working-class neighborhood on the west side of Asheville. At the outset, Reverend Corbin—imagine Andy Griffith as a cerebral preacher—emphasized that he didn't wish to be depicted as engaged in a running dispute with Reverend Sexton and Reverend Wolfaardt. "Ralph, Emile, and I met here the other day," he said. "We couldn't have had a better love fest in terms of the fundamental mission of Jesus. And they asked me to join in the rally. And my heart was breaking because I couldn't take that next step with them. Because we know how hard it is to get the word out. You can't ask for better enemies. We have the same aim, which is to bring a spiritual renewal to our communities in the name of Christ. But I want to do it under the rubric of freedom. And what they're going about is a form of cultural coercion. My biggest concern is the lack of prayer in church, not in school. What we don't do in church we seem to want to make happen in school, where there's no premise other than that you've got a bunch of kids there."

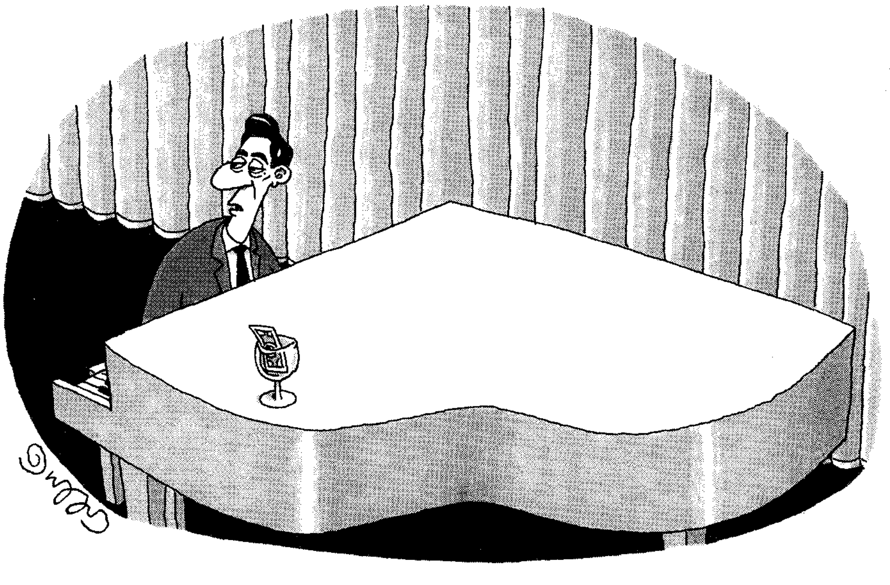
At one point, Reverend Corbin alluded to an episode last year that polarized the Christian clergy. By Asheville standards, this one began typically enough. With Halloween approaching, a woman named Byron Ballard, the high priestess (a.k.a. head witch) of a Wiccan coven called Notre Dame de l'Herbe Mouillée (Our Lady of the Wet Grass), submitted to the office of Mayor Leni Sitnick a request for an official proclamation of Earth Religions Awareness Week. The Mayor, a hospitable woman who has a reputation for being open-minded to a fault, not only agreed to sign it but welcomed the coven members and their children's group, the Blessed Bees, to the city-council chambers. There the Blessed Bees sang a traditional pagan song and had their picture taken presenting the Mayor with a basket of organic apples, an event reported in the next day's *Citizen-Times* under the headline "AREA WITCHES GET A BOOST FROM CITY." Soon enough—it was the sort of reaction that could have been timed with a stopwatch—an alliance of fundamentalist and evangelical pastors and laypeople called the Community Council for Biblical Values (which has a significant membership overlap with the "We Still Pray" organizers) presented Mayor Sitnick with a request for a Lordship of Jesus Christ Awareness Week proclamation. The Mayor, who happens to be Jewish, was on the verge of signing this as well when Reverend Corbin and four other ministers, including the Episcopal bishop of the western North Carolina diocese, intervened and implored her not to. "That strained every Baptist bone in my body," Reverend Corbin recalled. "I went to her and said, 'Leni, God love you, we would like for you not to do this. It trivializes everything we're trying to accomplish in our ministries.' She thought she would be making us happy by declaring Lordship of Jesus Christ Awareness Week, but right after signing a proclamation for the Wiccans, that made us mad. Then the Evangelicals said, 'There goes a bunch of liberals who don't care about the Lordship of Jesus.'" In the end, the Wiccans decided to return their proclamation, which gave Mayor Sitnick the leeway to decline to proclaim Lordship of Jesus Christ Awareness Week and to announce a self-imposed moratorium on mayoral proclamations.

A few hours before the "We Still Pray" rally, I visited with Reverend Jimmy Dykes, of North Asheville Baptist Church, who was then the chairman of the Community Council for Biblical Values. "There was never any question in the Christian community that the Wiccans have the same right to organize and worship that my church does," Reverend Dykes assured me. "We just wanted to set the record straight concerning our heritage. We simply were declaring that Jehovah God and Lord Jesus Christ were sovereign over Asheville."

The rally, which was scheduled to begin at 7 P.M., got started about half an hour late because of congestion on the roads leading to A. C. Reynolds High School. Newspaper advertisements and flyers—sent along with "Dear Pastor" cover letters to area clergymen, including Rabbi Ratner, who gave me his copy—had urged "Bible believing Christians" to "stand up and be counted." In the end, ten thousand disciples filled the stadium bleachers or milled on the oval track surrounding the football field, and the police, after blocking the highway exits, estimated that they turned away as many more. Idling motorists had the consolation of being able to tune in to a couple of Christian radio stations that broadcast the proceedings. (Later, when I asked Reverend Sexton about the phrase "Bible believing Christians," he said he "would have preferred different wording" but hadn't been consulted. No matter. Given the phenomenon known as Jewish Standard Time—the tendency of about eighty per cent of any given synagogue or temple congregation to show up at least forty-five minutes after a service begins—it's unlikely that many Hebrews would have ever made it off the interstate.) I left my motel extra early and arrived just in time for the delayed opening prayer. I parked and was trudging up a long incline, past rows of chartered buses, when I heard a voice say over the public-address system, "Whether you eat or drink or sit in traffic, do it all in the glory of God!"

That seeming non sequitur established a fitting tone, given that the premise of the entire event was the straw-man proposition that the Supreme Court opposes prayer, period. Reverend Sexton worked that angle effectively when he quoted from William Rehnquist's fierce dissent in Santa Fe v. Doe, in which the Chief Justice contended that the majority opinion "bristles with hostility to all things religious in public life." Reverend Wolfaardt added a bit of ironic commentary when, during his turn at the microphone, he asked all Board of Education employees and police officers to stand and be recognized, explaining, "We want to honor those people who carry the gospel light into places that you and I are not allowed to go."

A parade of preachers with variegated homiletic styles provided the main entertainment: old-style mountain gibbering, tearful warbling, take-no-prisoners fear-mongering. One crowd pleaser was a lapel-grabbing missionary named Wendell Runion, who said, "Someone asked me today, 'Is this gonna be an in-your-face rally?' And here's my answer—*Yes, this is in your face!* And why is that? Because we need to remember what happens when people fail to understand what a document says. Whether it's the Constitution or the Bible, it says what it means and it means what it says. When we start interpreting, then we're in trouble. We started out as a nation under God. Then came the pluralistic society. Everybody says, 'Give me my rights.' So we're living in an age of rights and we've forgotten that *God* is what is right. It's a *sin* to deny the privilege to pray in this ballpark. We're still a Christian nation because we were founded as a Christian nation and we're letting *them*, the Supreme Court, take our liberties away from us. They, the opposition, ask, 'When will you speak out?' We



"This next number goes out to all the little people I met on my way back down."

will speak now. We will speak loudly."

Reverend Runion was followed by Donnie Parks, the police chief of the town of Hendersonville and one of four African-Americans in the V.I.P. section (more than in the entire rest of the stadium, as near as I could tell). "The Supreme Court says that when we pray at football games we're imposing our will upon others with those prayers," said Chief Parks. "Well, that's what opposing teams do at football games, isn't it? They try to impose their will on each other. Perhaps our Supreme Court Justices should come to a few ballgames."

When the faithful weren't boisterously expressing their enthusiasm for that sort of logic, they behaved with a poignant docility. At twilight, a scrim of gray mist descended beyond the silhouette of the mountains, and a blanket of shirt-soaking humidity settled in. For an outdoor gathering, the ambience felt remarkably claustrophobic. People fanned themselves with American flags, empty pizza boxes, and pasteboard signs that said "Luke 11:1—Lord, Teach Us to Pray."

Finally came the much anticipated spontaneous-prayer portion of the program. "We Still Pray" business cards with the Lord's Prayer printed on the back had been circulated, but, of course, everyone present already knew the words and knew what to do. Ralph Sexton explained that, in a scenario he hoped would take place subsequently at football games, "Miss Yolanda Miller is going to sing the national anthem, we're going to applaud, and after the applause we're going to pause for a moment of reflection—and in that moment of reflection there just might be some *spontaneous prayer!*"

During the anthem itself, a lot of people had their hands on their hearts, but the singing was the usual low-decibel, mumbled stadium-crowd fare. Not so, however, the recitation of the Lord's Prayer. It rang out loud and clear.

"Thank you, God bless you," Reverend Sexton said at its conclusion. "Thank you on the visitors' side. Thank you in the end zones. Thank you on the outside. Thank you, Lord Jesus."

Eight days later, Reverend Sexton returned to the stadium for the season opener of the A. C. Reynolds Rockets, who had won the state championship a year ago but lost twenty-six players to graduation and therefore were perhaps in the market for some divine intervention. During the pregame, everything went according to plan. At the conclusion of the national anthem, Reverend Sexton bowed his head for a minute and, he said later, "Spontaneous prayers broke out all around where I was. And the proof that it was spontaneous was that there was no orchestration." Reverend Sexton decided to attend the A. C. Reynolds game not only because the stadium had been the site of the "We Still Pray" rally but because Josh Meadows, the Rockets' star running back, is a member of his congregation. Josh scored twice and knelt in the end zone with his head bowed after both touchdowns. He was praying, but it wasn't quite enough; the Rockets lost to the Tuscola Mountaineers, 27–26.

Meanwhile, "We Still Pray" tremors were spreading throughout the Bible Belt, with reports filtering in from Texas, Mississippi, and South Carolina of similar local initiatives in the wake of Santa Fe v. Doe. Asheville, naturally, had its homegrown response. Three groups of pagans—Coven Oldenwilde, the Appalachian Pagan Alliance, and the Earth Religions Awareness Week committee—have filed requests for permission to use football stadiums for rallies. The Appalachian Pagan Alliance hopes to hold its rally to coincide with the autumn equinox, under the banner "We Still Work Magic." The Earth Religions Awareness Week committee, Byron Ballard said the other day, is applying for a date in late October.

"We're calling this 'a candlelight vigil to honor the ancestors' rather than mentioning witches," she told me. "It's the same language we used last year, when we kicked off Earth Religions Awareness Week with a 'prayer breakfast.' We try to be very careful with how we phrase things. If you say, 'We meditate and cast spells,' that sounds scary. So what we're saying is 'We are praying, and our prayer may take a little different form than yours. But it's still prayer.' We're saying, 'What we do is what you do. We pray.' " ♦

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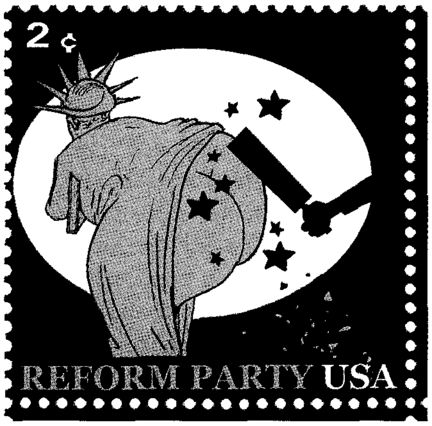

ISTVAN BANYAI

Kickoff, with Columbus Day triple-header: (1) Million Rowboat Melee in New York Harbor demanding return of Statue of Liberty to French meddlers and replacement with a one-hundred-per-cent-American-made monument, facing the other way. (2) On to Columbus Circle for demonstration urging Congress to pass a bill declaring Cristoforo Colombo the first illegal U.S. immigrant. (3) Mock battle in fountain: Mayflower rams and sinks Niña, Pinta, and Santa María.

October 10th: Major foreign-policy address before Bob Jones University Alumni Association, calling for a blue-ribbon panel to investigate who gave the Jews so many holidays so they can rest up and outwit hardworking Americans.

October 11th: Speech before the Flat Earth Society outlining Party's position on making English the official language of Asia, plus closing of all exploitative, unsafe, and illegal Asian sweatshops and returning them to the U.S., where they belong.

October 15th: Mass rally supporting the N.R.A.'s call to curb jackbooted federal-government goons from weakening America's will by issuing wussy postage stamps. Suggest Great Bullet Holes of the Century, etc.

October 17th: Speech before the Anti-Fluoridation League advocating deportation of the Mexican hat dance.

October 18th: Launch of Operation Fair Game, calling for open season on Chinese pandas, to thin out dangerously overpopulated American zoos.

October 20th: Rally at the site of Custer's Last Stand promoting plan to declare Native Americans retroactive foreigners and demanding that the Veterans of Foreign Wars change their name to the Veterans of Foreign Wars That Were None of America's Business.

October 21st: Ceremony accepting the endorsement of the Party platform by the Free-Soil, Dixiecrat, Copperhead, Greenback, and Fenian Parties.

October 25th: Entourage visits militia-man camp as part of the Party's Fair Trade campaign pledge to establish a new immigration policy: we'll trade ten thousand welfare slackers for every ten Chilean generals.

October 28th: Address before the Mixed Nut Council advocating formation of a special New York City traffic police squad granted full diplomatic immunity for letting the air out of the tires of any car bearing diplomatic license plates found within one hundred blocks of the United Nations.

November 3rd: Speech before the Red Meat Council denouncing the alarming drop in U.S. cholesterol levels caused by ethnic restaurants, and demanding that the F.D.A. impose minimum daily fat and riboflavin levels in all meals served by licensed eateries.

November 7th: Victory celebration. B.Y.O.B. ♦

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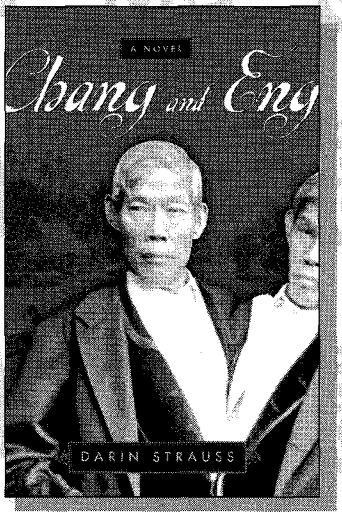

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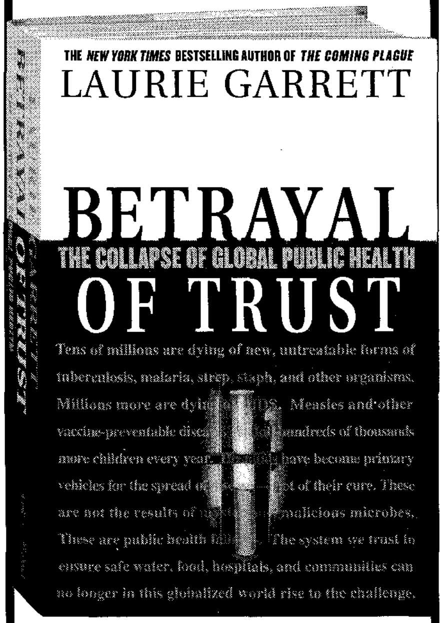
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How a small-town rep

BY ALEX K

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Things change slowly in Princeton, Illinois, a town of Victorian houses and cobblestoned streets. Over the past hundred years, the population has grown from five thousand to seventy-two hundred. The parking meters on Main Street still take dimes, nickels, and pennies; violations carry a fifty-cent fine And for thirty-three years David Silverberg has been a reporter here, a correspondent for the La Salle *News Tribune*, a daily with roughly twenty thousand readers in three counties. He works out of a second-floor office on Main Street, above an insurance agency and across the street from the China Buffet, which he has never frequented because he goes home for lunch every day.

Silverberg is, in the fullest sense of the word, a newspaperman. In the few days I spent with him, he snapped photos of three Chamber of Commerce Honor Roll inductees (a fourth had died that morning), took an ad from a local businessman, and wrote an article on a ninety-one-year-old former village superintendent and another on a couple who were hosting two foreign exchange students. If a reader calls him at home in the evening to complain of a missed newspaper—he's had the same listed phone number for thirty-three years—Silverberg will personally deliver a copy. He is often awakened late at night to cover a house fire or a car wreck; the paper has a policy of running a story about any automobile accident in which someone has been ticketed, injured, or killed—or has hit a deer. He halfheartedly complains about the long hours (usually fifty to sixty hours a week) and the low pay (thirty-three thousand eight hundred dollars), but he loves both his work and the community he writes for.

"Let's just say I know a lot of people," he told me. "That's one of the advantages of staying in the same place. The people of Bureau County have always been wonderful to me. They helped my wife

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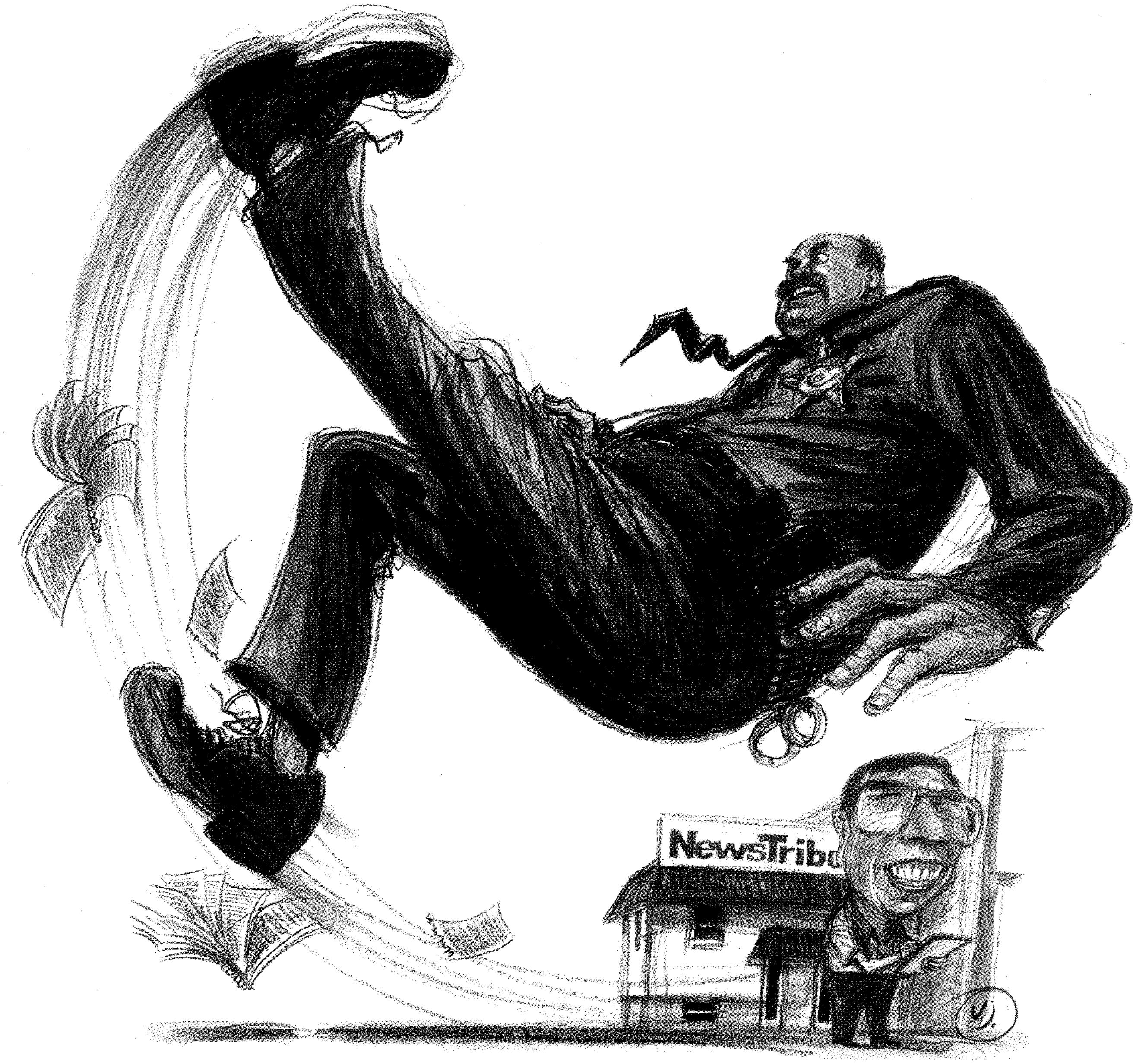
shoulders make ally vulnerable. He speaks without inflection, almost in a deadpan tone, as if there were a punch line waiting at the end of every thought. (There never is.) When you ask him how he's doing, he answers, "All righty." He's also a deeply religious man, a Christian (though his father was Jewish), in whom people often confide. "Everybody knows Dave," one local businessman said. "And everybody trusts him."

There will probably always be a place for small-town reporters, who record school-board meetings, tout local sports victories, and keep tabs on the comings and goings at the county courthouse. Of the nation's fifteen hundred daily newspapers, two-thirds have a circulation of less than twenty-five thousand. But reporting on neighbors and friends may be among the toughest of journalistic assignments—one that requires both backbone and at least a pinch of humility. You frequently run into the subjects of your stories, at the supermarket or on Main Street, and if your readers are looking for you they certainly know where to find you. "People around here will let you know how they feel," Silverberg said.

For his part, Silverberg has covered some murder and drug trials, including one involving two local businessmen, which took him to Chicago for three weeks. But the stories he's proudest of concern the consolidation of four county high schools, a process that spanned six years. "I get to see something from start to finish, from the first meeting to the referendum to the building of a new



The articles—about a missing Harley, a dead reporter, and a mistress in Texas—shocked people. "This isn't Chicago," they said.

VICTOR JUHASZ

school," he told me. "It's just been a really neat experience." The story Silverberg has become best known for among friends and neighbors, however, is one he stumbled on by accident. Silverberg's biggest scoop—which, all things considered, he'd rather not talk about—involves Bureau County Sheriff Greg Johnson, a questionable raffle, and a dead reporter.

Greg Johnson, a broad-shouldered man with a receding hairline and a bushy mustache, was a popular sheriff. In 1994, he had run against his boss, who'd been sheriff for a decade, and won, mostly because of the admiration he'd earned during his years working undercover as a Bureau County deputy. In the fall of 1998, Sheriff Johnson held a twenty-dollar-a-ticket raffle to raise money for his reëlection. First prize was a brand-new Harley-Davidson.

The raffle came and went, and the townspeople began to wonder who'd won the bike. A new Harley in a town the size of Princeton, after all, would be noticed. Finally, after weeks of speculation in the local cafés, one ticket buyer decided he'd been bamboozled and consulted a lawyer. Nothing ever came of that, but a local reporter named Thetis Sims started nosing around. Sims, a part-time correspondent for the Kewanee *Star Courier*, a small paper based in the county just west of Bureau, heard that maybe Johnson had pocketed the money. She also heard that Johnson, who was married and had a teen-age daughter, had fathered a child with a woman in Lubbock, Texas, and had used a county car to make visits there. Sims found the birth announcement on-line in the Lubbock *Avalanche-Journal*. She tried, over several weeks, to get an interview with the Sheriff, who refused to speak with her.

Thetis Sims in many ways was the antithesis of Silverberg. She fancied herself a big-city reporter. Her friends nicknamed her Scoop. The mother of six grown children, she was a rather large woman, who had a heart condition. She had to stop covering the Princeton City Council because of the long, steep walk from the parking lot. The bright floral dresses she favored reflected her good cheer, and she was generally well liked,

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VILLE ET VILLAGE

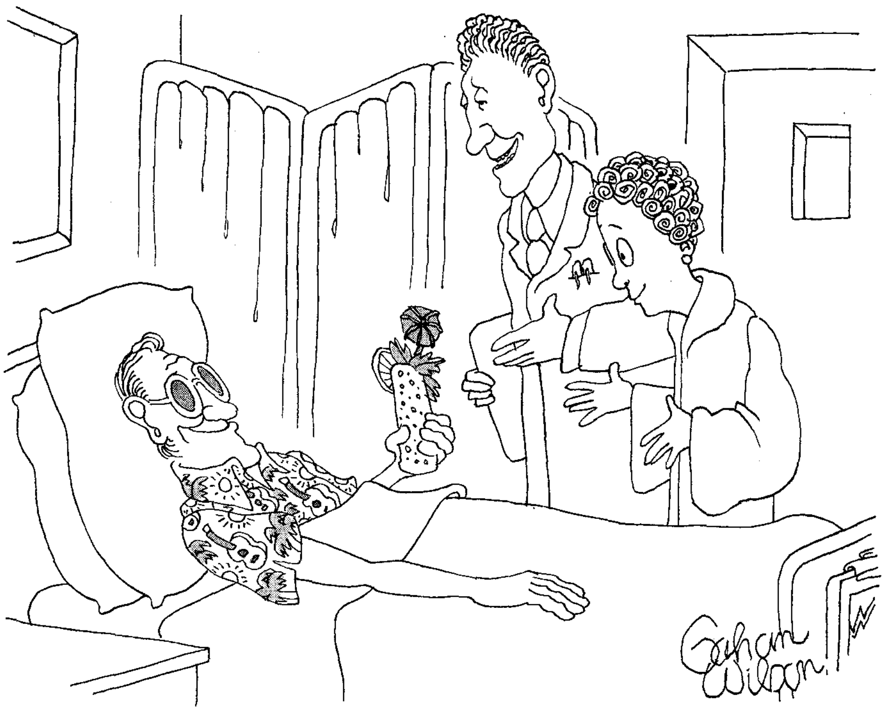
though her bluntness irritated some people. It was pretty well known around Princeton that Sims didn't like Johnson and that she had supported his opponent in the recent election.

Sims's pursuit of the Sheriff unnerved her editor, Dave Clarke, because his newspaper rarely ran investigative pieces. At one point, he told Sims he'd prefer "to report on someone else's investigation rather than take the lead," and so put off running a story. It also, apparently, discomfited Johnson, because last year, on the morning of Thursday, February 11th, he decided to pay Sims a visit. What happened next is unclear—Johnson refuses to say much and some of what he does say conflicts with other evidence—but this much is certain: shortly after his arrival at Sims's home, Sims slumped over in her recliner. Around her lay her reporter's notebook, a pamphlet on the Freedom of Information Act, and four pages faxed from the State Board of Elections relating to the raffle. Johnson called for an ambulance and later told Sims's family and friends that he hadn't performed C.P.R. because the latex gloves he carried for such an occasion kept breaking. An autopsy determined that Sims, who was fifty-five, died of a heart attack.

In a farewell to Sims, Clarke wrote in his column that she "fittingly died with her boots on." But he dropped the inquiry into the Sheriff's conduct; his paper didn't have the resources, he told me.

Silverberg had had his own run-in with Sheriff Johnson several years earlier. During Johnson's first term in office, two young boys on a school bus spotted a car overturned in a small stream along a country road. When they got home, they told their mother, who called the sheriff's department. A deputy searched the location and found nothing. The next day, deputies continued the search and eventually found the car, half hidden under a bridge. The driver had apparently died shortly after impact. But Sheriff Johnson, presumably embarrassed by the time it took to find the wreck, publicly implied that the woman had given them inaccurate information. Silverberg had known the woman since she was a child in 4-H, and believed her story. It was a seemingly small matter, but Silverberg chafed at a public official's twisting the facts. So he filed his first ever Freedom of Information Act request, for the 911 tape. It turned out that the woman had given the dispatcher the right location, which Silverberg reported in a follow-up story.

After Sims's death, Silverberg heard the buzz about the raffle and about the Sheriff's alleged trips to see his mistress. This was big stuff in Princeton, where towns-



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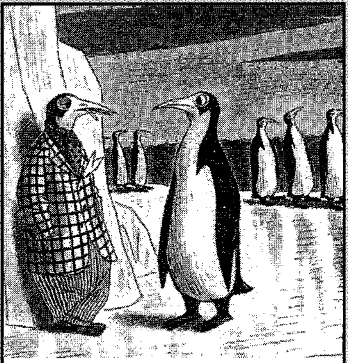

"I just got damn well fed up with being formal all the time."

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people are so attentive to propriety that the county circuit clerk was interrogated about $26.36 paid to an employee for a day that the clerk's office had been closed. But Silverberg was ambivalent about pursuing the story, because the rumors seemed so invasive of the Sheriff's private life, and because, as he told me later, he wasn't certain it "was my place to make news."

And then, one evening, Silverberg ran into Thetis Sims's husband, Cletus, at Wal-Mart. Cletus confirmed that his wife had been investigating the raffle and the matter of the missing Harley. He also told Silverberg that, at the hospital where the paramedics had taken his wife, the Sheriff mentioned that he had been showing Thetis something before she died. Cletus believed that the Sheriff had presented Thetis with an anonymous letter that had been mailed to neighbors earlier that same day, accusing Cletus of sex crimes. It was signed, "A Concerned Father and a saddened Husband." (The accusations were completely unfounded.) To Cletus, it seemed clear that the Sheriff was trying to intimidate his wife into backing off her investigation. Silverberg was horrified. "Oh, my God!" he exclaimed to Cletus. "What a way to die!" Silverberg remembered, too, that during Sheriff Johnson's reëlection campaign another anonymous letter had been circulated, which accused Johnson's opponent of heinous crimes, including beating his wife. The incident blew over, and was never reported in the local papers, but there were townspeople who attributed the Sheriff's victory to those charges—which were entirely unsubstantiated.

Silverberg made an appointment to see the Sheriff at his office, in a small, squat edifice across the street from the courthouse. Silverberg asked an editor, Lori Cinotte, to accompany him so that he would have a witness to whatever the Sheriff had to say. "From my dealings with Mr. Johnson, I knew what he was capable of doing," he told me, referring to the incident of the overturned car. At the meeting, the Sheriff appeared bored by Silverberg's questions. He explained impatiently that the state police were investigating Sims's death, and that someone from Chicago whose name he didn't remember had won the Harley. He also told Silverberg that he couldn't provide financial details about the raffle because his campaign records had been subpoenaed

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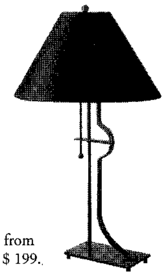

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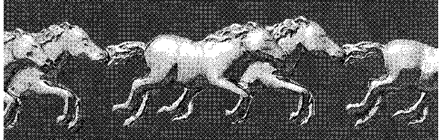

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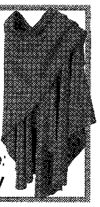

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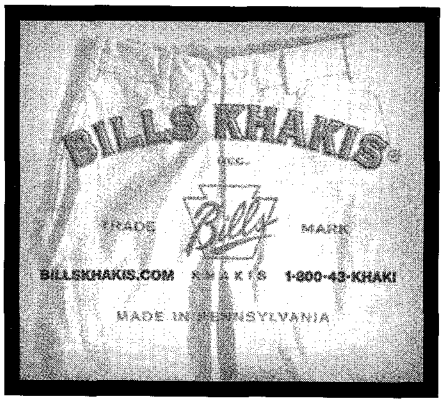

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by his wife, who had filed for divorce. Silverberg did not ask about the anonymous letter. The meeting lasted ten minutes; afterward Silverberg told Cinotte he wasn't sure there was anything to write. "Dave knew how it might be perceived—that Dave Silverberg and the *News Tribune* were on a witch-hunt," Cinotte later told me.

That same day, Silverberg called Princeton's police chief, who had been Johnson's campaign-committee chairman. Of the raffle, the chief admitted to Silverberg, "I understand a guy won, but I can't find out who." It was the reporter's first indication that people close to Johnson also had questions about the raffle, and so Silverberg wrote a front-page story about it, which appeared on April 28th. It mentioned that the winner of the bike was a Chicagoan, and that Sims had been working on a story about the raffle when she died. It also contained a passage that, even in Silverberg's straight-ahead prose, let his readers know that he, too, had questions. The paragraph—variations of which appeared like a refrain in the numerous articles that Silverberg wrote on the Sheriff in the coming months—read, "Thetis Sims, 55, of 100 First St., Tiskilwa suffered a heart attack while talking with Bureau County Sheriff Greg Johnson in her home around 12:30 P.M. on Feb. 11. Sims and Johnson were the only ones in Sims' house at the time."

Silverberg's story immediately caused a stir. The next morning, the Sheriff's wife called and told the reporter that she and Johnson were only separated, and that she had no documents relating to the raffle. She also told him that Johnson had told her someone from Michigan had won the motorcycle. Silverberg promptly wrote another front-page article. It had been two and a half months since Sims's death.

When Silverberg published his two articles, people were shocked: no one in Princeton could recall having heard such allegations levelled at a local politician before. ("This isn't Chicago," many people I encountered remarked.) Indeed, the only reason townspeople took the charges against the Sheriff seriously, one businessman told me, was that "Dave is who he is." It was clear, said another resident, that "Dave wasn't satisfied." Sims's daughter Melissa said to me, "You meet him, he's meek and mild, a nervous fellow. But nobody had the balls to do it first. And then Dave did it."

The Sheriff was incensed. He issued a prepared statement—a rare occurrence in Princeton, where if anyone has something to say publicly he usually just calls the paper or walks over to Silverberg's office. In the statement, the Sheriff declared that a Lyle Rawson, of Chicago, had won the raffle, and that he had chosen to take twelve thousand dollars in cash rather than the bike. "Thetis Sims, as a reporter for the Kewanee *Star Courier*, asked to talk with me at her home," he continued. "Soon after my arrival while exchanging initial pleasantries, Thetis had a heart attack. . . . An autopsy found that Thetis died from natural causes. . . . It is shameful to use Thetis Sims' death as a springboard to launch a malicious smear campaign against me." He concluded, "This is a big case of political sour grapes."

Silverberg's stories galvanized his competitors across the street at the Bureau County *Republican*, a thrice-weekly paper. "Dave big-time surprised us," said Lori Hamer, thirty-four, who was one of eight reporters at the *Republican*. During her twelve years at the paper, her "biggest story"—by which she means the one that got the most response—was about a squirrel that scurried up to a local mini-mart every morning and received a doughnut from the cashier. Hamer, along with a colleague and her editor, Tom Martin, reported a story in which the Sheriff asserted that one of his supporters had personally handed the money to Rawson. But, the article went on, the supporter said he had done no such thing, and calls to directory assistance, an Internet search, and an inquiry to the secretary of state had all failed to turn up anyone in Chicago named Lyle Rawson. The byline read "B.C.R. Staff," in part because Hamer was pregnant with her second child, and her editor worried about reprisals from the Sheriff. Then the Peoria *Journal Star* weighed in, reporting on trips taken by Johnson, partly at the county's expense, to the Texas town where his mistress and newborn daughter lived. The local prosecutor asked the state's attorney general to investigate the allegations.

Over the next few months, a series of newspaper stories continued to poke holes in the Sheriff's statements. The Peoria paper, for example, debunked the notion that Johnson and Sims were

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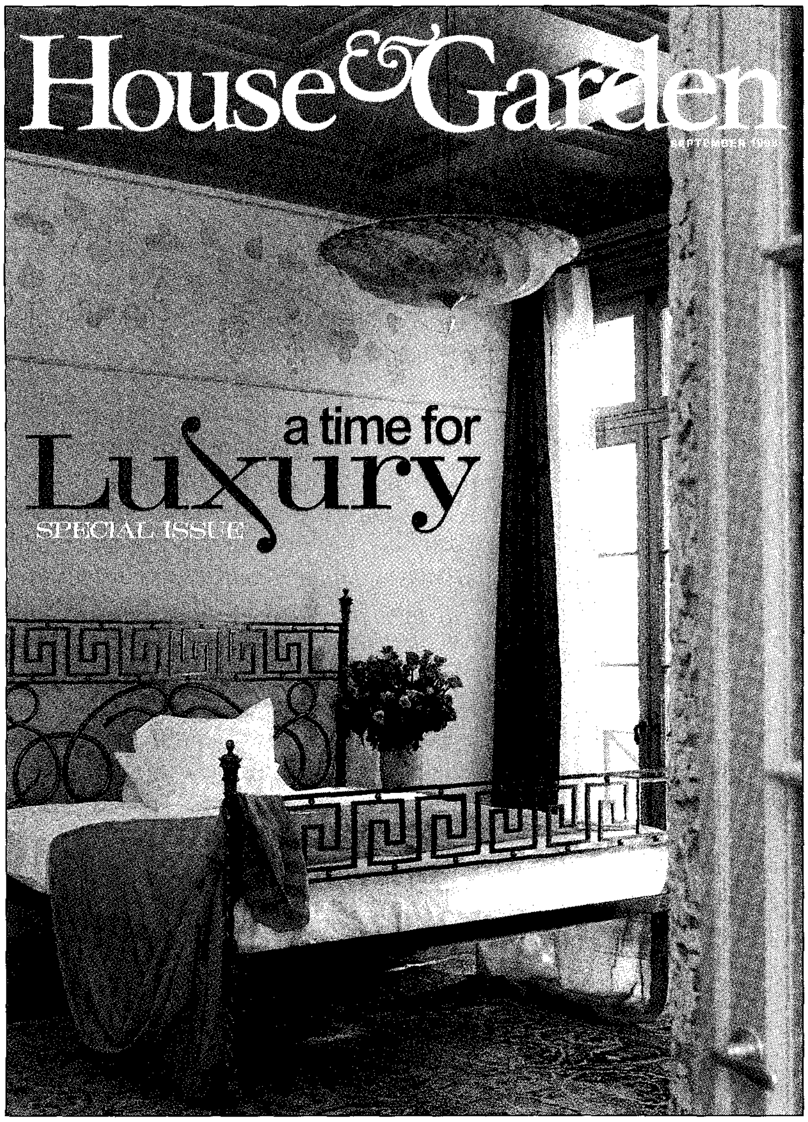
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"exchanging pleasantries" when she died. The paper established that the Sheriff had been on the line to Princeton's assistant postmaster inquiring about the legality of sending defamatory mail when Sims had her heart attack. He ended that call to phone for an ambulance. Silverberg reported that Johnson's campaign treasurer had refused to sign an amended report on the raffle that the Sheriff tried to file with the elections board. Meanwhile, the phantom Lyle Rawson had become a joke around town. The Bureau County *Republican* ran a cartoon, a takeoff on the "Where's Waldo?" series, that showed the Sheriff holding a microscope to a map of Illinois, above the caption "Where's Lyle?" At one point, things looked so bleak for Johnson that he was rumored to have committed suicide, until the local radio station announced that he was very much alive.

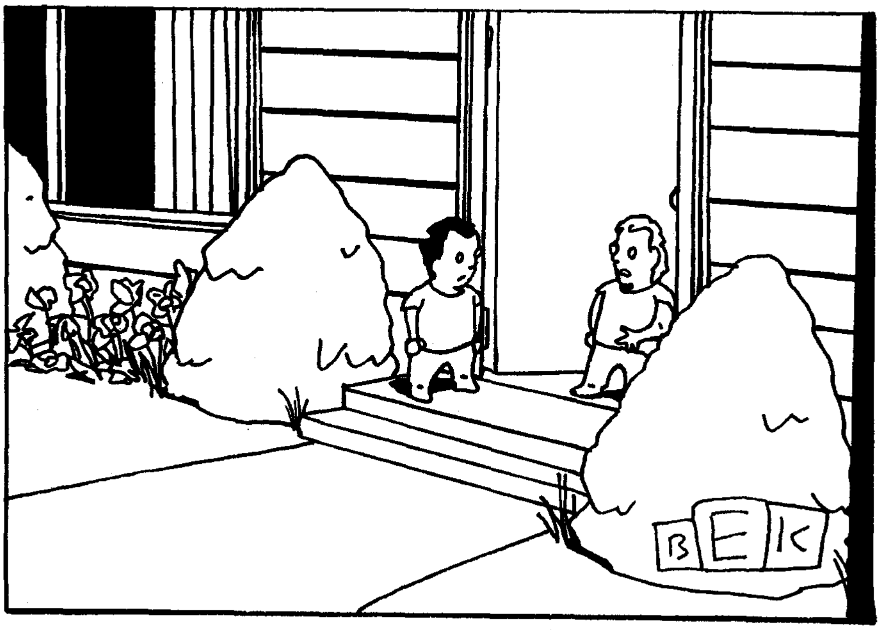
Nevertheless, when I arrived in Princeton last January—almost a year after Sims's death—Sheriff Johnson was feeling cocksure and Silverberg looked sheepish. Silverberg and his colleagues had begun to fear that the attorney general's investigation, then six months old, had fizzled. And earlier that month Johnson had claimed a victory of sorts when he was acquitted of assaulting his nineteen-year-old daughter. She had filed charges after a summer incident in which her father, furious because she'd had her tongue pierced, flipped her upside down inside his squad car. When the case came to trial, however, she proved to be a reluctant witness, and the prosecution lost. Silverberg was standing outside the courtroom, notebook in hand, with other reporters, and Johnson singled him out. "David, you know I have nothing to say to you," he said. The next day, Johnson delivered another written statement to the *News Tribune* and the Bureau County *Republican*, which both papers printed in full. The Sheriff again suggested that the allegations against him were "political attempts to smear me," and went on to name his political enemies, among them a local judge, the prosecutor, the coroner, and the editor Tom Martin, of the Bureau County *Republican*. But he saved his harshest remarks for Silverberg.

"One of the most journalistically shoddy tactics taken by David Silverberg," the Sheriff wrote, "is that after any article, even about my personal life only, he has reminded readers of the full litany of every allegation ever made about me. I sometimes wonder if the *News Tribune* is a newspaper or a history paper. Most shameful is that he keeps repeating that Thetis Sims died in my presence. Even Coroner Janice Wamhoff, a democrat political fanatic in my opinion, found that Thetis died from natural causes. . . . David Silverberg has been on a crusade to bring me down." Johnson concluded by saying he would not have "any further comments on these matters." When I stopped by to request an interview, his chief deputy and loyalist, Bob Britt, gruffly explained, "We've got too much bad stuff from the press. We're not going to talk to anyone."

Silverberg was made uncomfortable by the Sheriff's words, and, at least initially, begged off talking with me. "I don't want to be the center of attention," he told me. "I realize I'm in the middle of it, and I guess there's nothing I can do."

On July 28th, a grand jury indicted Johnson on four felony counts, charging him with falsely reporting in campaign-finance documents that he had paid someone named Lyle Rawson twelve thousand dollars and with destroying documents relating to the raffle. If convicted, Johnson, who has pleaded not guilty to all charges, could face up to five years in prison. He had been asked in advance by the assistant attorney general handling the case to surrender himself on the Friday the indictment was issued, but he chose, instead, to leave town and visit his family in Washington State. On a tip from a Peoria *Journal Star* reporter who'd spoken with one of Johnson's relatives, the Sheriff was arrested in Portland, Oregon, and spent the night in jail before posting a ten-thousand-dollar bond. (The same relative, who asked for anonymity, told the *Journal Star* that Johnson was headed for Mexico.) Even those who didn't believe that the Sheriff was planning to skip the country felt that his behavior reeked of arrogance. "People here rolled their eyes," a local radio reporter told me.

Johnson is now back in Princeton, still serving as sheriff—a position he will lose if convicted. No trial date has been set. The attorney general is investigating further allegations, and Johnson also faces a civil suit filed by Thetis Sims's daughter



"Your priorities change once you get a new toy."

• •

Melissa, which contends that he caused her mother's death. The suit asserts that the Sheriff distributed the defamatory letter, alleging that a young man told a police officer that he stuffed the missive into envelopes at the request of the Sheriff. The suit also contends that Johnson failed to perform C.P.R., which was part of his duty as a law-enforcement officer.

All of this has brought an unaccustomed amount of attention to Princeton, most of it unwelcome. "Everyone's ashamed," one businessman told me. "But we feel good someone's exposed him." Undeniably, the scandal has energized local journalists. A few months ago, as the story was still unfolding, I visited Hamer at her office, where she took a phone call from a source at the courthouse who'd heard more scuttlebutt about Johnson. She spoke softly because, as she later explained, the sports editor's wife is the county clerk. As she was about to hang up, I heard her tell her source, "Thanks, Deep," as if she were a Bob Woodward protégée. Hamer put off leaving the *Republican* for a higher-paying job, because she wanted to see the story through to the end. "It was a personal thing for reporters here to finish what Thetis started," Hamer told me.

Hamer has since left the paper, but Silverberg is still in his office across the street. The young reporters at the La Salle *News Tribune* have looked to the veteran for advice and inspiration. And his stories about the Sheriff—along with the stories from the Bureau County *Republican*—have already formed the beginning of a collection at the local historical society. Silverberg, though, seems unfazed by his brief fling as crusading investigative reporter, and he seems well aware that for all the accolades tossed his way by neighbors and friends he really didn't expose all that much. That was left to the other papers and to the attorney general's investigators. But Silverberg was the first to write about the suspicions raised by Sims, and in journalism being first means a lot. Silverberg says that people now come to him with alleged dirt on one politician or another, expecting him to dig. "I think because they've seen what I can do, they think I'm capable of things I'm not capable of," he said. "I do the best I can to keep up with the news in Bureau County."

"Dave probably reached as far as he wanted to reach," his editor, Linda Kleczewski, told me. "It was a strange road for Dave to follow." Indeed, Silverberg seems relieved to have the story behind him. The last time I spoke with him, he was off to a county board meeting. "I don't think I ever talked with you much about county board redistricting," he said. "That's one of my favorites." ♦

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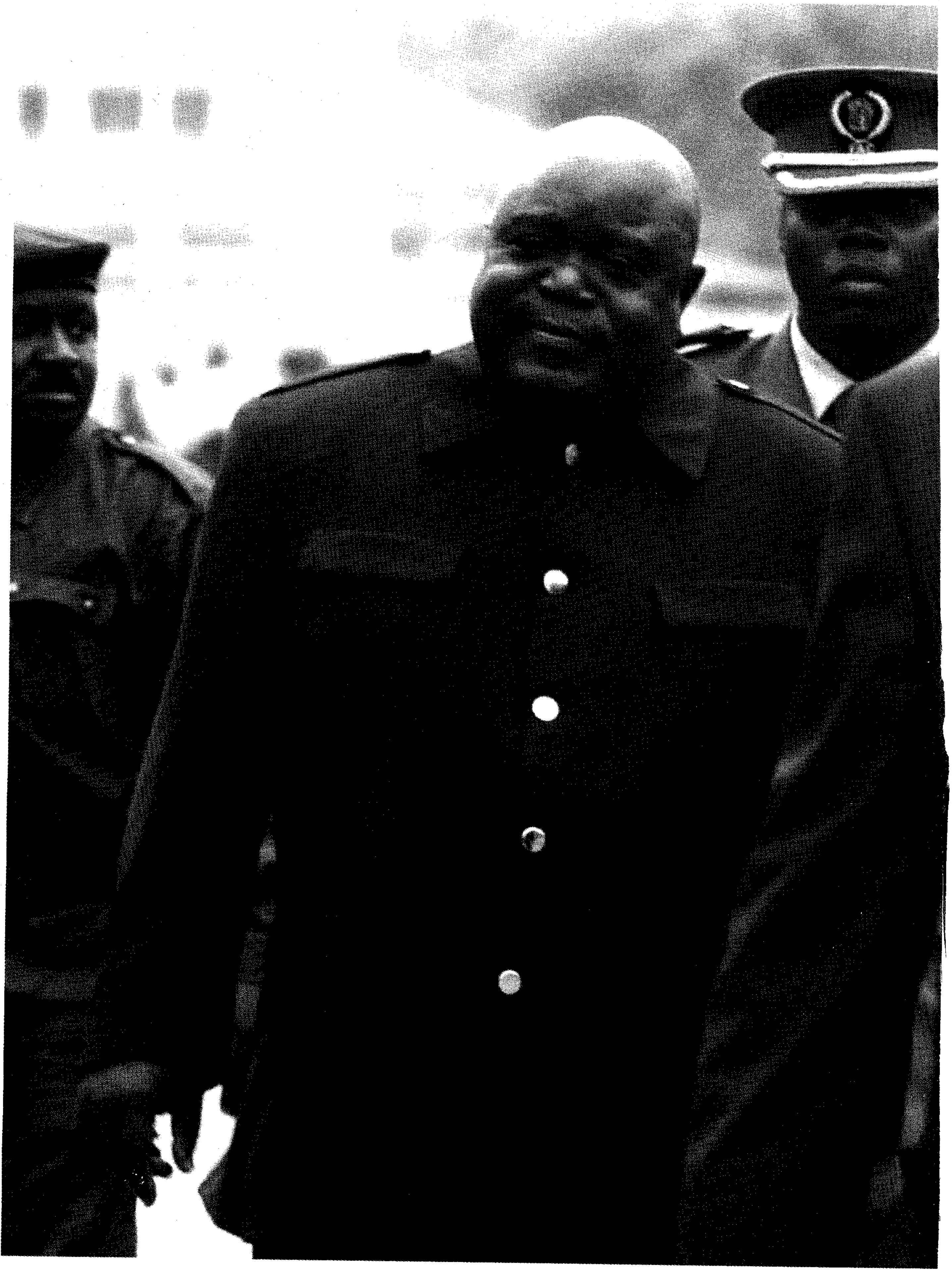

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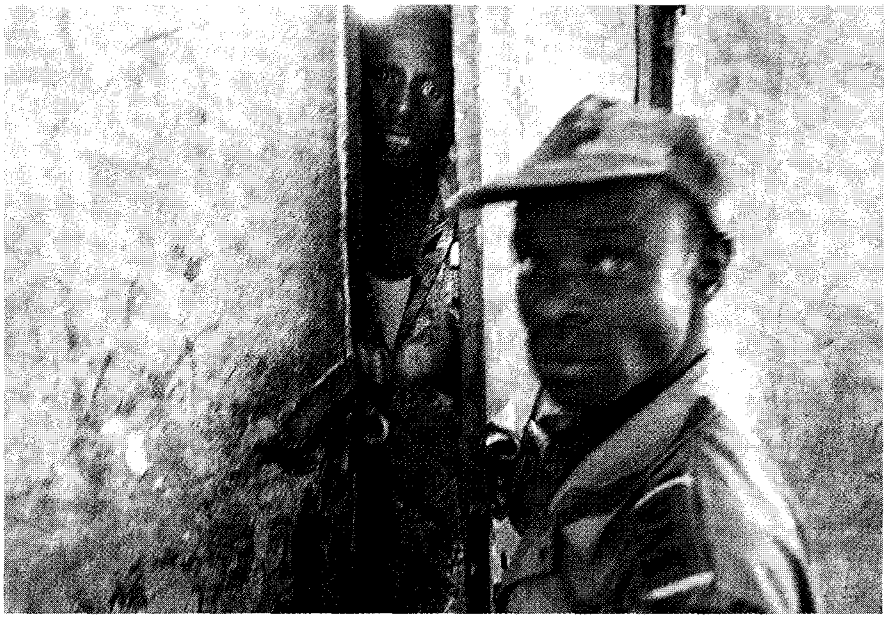
A REPORTER AT LARGE

FORSAKEN

Congo seems less a nation than a battlefield for countless African armies.

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH



Three years after Laurent-Desire Kabila proclaimed himself President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the streets of the capital are draped with lies. Banners read, "Laurent-Desire Kabila, the People's Choice"; "Power for the People"; "The Voice of the People Is the Voice of God."

Beneath the banners, the people themselves are forever on display, standing in a roadside haze of heat and dust and dampness, staring at oncoming traffic. The haze smells of diesel and charcoal and kerosene, of burned meat and smoked fish, of frying bananas and tropical blooms, of compost and sewage, of beer, mildew, and sweat. It clings in the nose and maddens the brain, like the stink of dead earthworms after a rain. To stand by the road in Kinshasa for any stretch of time requires a spirit of Sisyphean endurance. So when I arrived in the city one morning, and saw the banners and the masses of people beneath them, I asked the university student I'd hired to drive me around what the occasion was. "It's Thursday," he said. "But it could be any day." The Congolese are given to an ironic sort of gallows humor that reflects their circumstances—ask someone how it's going, and you're likely to be told, "Same as the country," meaning not well—but if my driver was joking I didn't get it. I'd been in Kinshasa before, and I didn't remember seeing such multitudes standing around, doing nothing. "Things are worse now," my driver said. "But the people aren't doing nothing. They're waiting."

Waiting for what? I asked, and he told me, "To move." The city was in the grip of a transportation crisis. "The vehicles exist," he said. "Minibuses, buses, taxis, trucks. They exist, plenty of them. And yet nothing budges. It's a political problem. The regime is the problem. The economy is totally fucked. This transport mess is just a tiny example, but it's typical." He said that the cost of many essential goods and services is fixed by the state, and that earlier this year the price of fuel had tripled, from one day to

Laurent Kabila, Congo's President, has made new enemies of old allies. Rwandan-backed rebels in Kisangani (above), a city laid waste by the fighting.

the next, while the price of transport remained constant, at a very low rate. "It's impossible for those who own the vehicles to make a profit," my driver said. "So there is this paralysis. The policy is meant to protect the people from exploitation, and instead it punishes them. The people complain. But you see the result." Then he said something that I would hear, in one form or another, from almost everyone I talked to in Kinshasa who wasn't on Kabila's payroll. He said, "The people have no voice."

More banners hung overhead: "United Around Laurent-Desire Kabila to Achieve Dignity"; "United Around Laurent-Desire Kabila to Achieve Prosperity"; "National Unity Around Laurent-Desire Kabila for a Radiant Future."

Of course, it was still possible for transport operators to earn a few Congolese francs if they packed in the passengers and cut all other costs, such as maintenance. So, periodically, a terrifying-looking jalopy would coast to a halt by the curb—not so much a car or a van as the ghost of a car or a van, patched over like a fool's motley with bits of scrap metal, plastic sheeting, duct tape, and string, its windshield shattered, and with arms, legs, heads, and other body parts poking from its open doors and windows. Before it reached a full stop, a boy would jump out, demonstrating with imperious shouts and gestures that he was in charge; then he'd discharge a few passengers and select replacements from the waiting flock, shoving them into place with the help of a short baton. Travelling in this fashion, my driver told me, it is typical for many of Kinshasa's five million citizens to spend two or three hours traversing the sprawling city from home to work, and two or three hours again from work to home.

As we spoke, it began to rain, lightly at first, then heavily. The roadside crowds thinned but did not disappear. Those who remained took off their shoes and stood barefoot and bareheaded, or covered themselves as best they could—with umbrellas or bits of cloth or briefcases, or by tugging the collars of their jackets or shirts over their heads—and many started walking. The rain let up shortly after it began, but by then the drainage ditches and open sewers that ran alongside the potholed pavement had backed up and flooded the roadway. Traffic slowed to a crawl. "Voilà," my driver said, as we forded our way through a long stretch of knee-deep water, strewn with stalled cars and foul flotsam. "Lake Kabila."

Three years ago, my driver would have called the submerged street "Lake Mobutu," giving the credit for Congo's degradation where it was due, to President Mobutu Sese Seko, who had named the country Zaire and robbed it to ruin for thirty-two years before Kabila took over. Even now, Mobutu remains fixed in the international imagination as the grotesque apogee of the postcolonial African bullyboy. Spectacularly corrupt, insatiably predatory, dapper and deeply weird in his leopard-skin cap, dark glasses, and sorcerer's swagger stick, he kept himself swaddled in luxury, and buttressed by doting Cold War patrons in Washington, Brussels, and Paris, as he sponsored cross-border insurgencies against neighboring countries and crushed or bought off all domestic opposition. He liked to call himself Papa, the nation's "founder" and "guide," but he treated its children with rank disdain, systematically reducing their lot—body and soul—to a condition of want and disarray akin to that of orphanhood.

One might imagine, then, that Mobutu should not have been a hard act to improve upon, and that was certainly Kabila's attitude when he came to power, presenting himself as a lifelong anti-Mobutist revolutionary. The reality of Kabila's résumé, however, was not so glorious. It was true that from 1967 to 1986 he had managed, as a rebel warlord, to hold out against Mobutu's forces in a tiny redoubt in the mountains of eastern Congo. But his record there was grim enough to make Mobutu look almost benign by comparison. Kabila, preaching a crude sort of Maoist doctrine, had ruled with an absolute hand, and what he called a "liberated" zone rapidly descended into the sorriest state of dystopia. While his cadres chanted Mobutu-style slogans ("We are the men of President Kabila . . . founder . . . guardian . . . light . . . creator"), he enriched himself with gold from local mines. He trusted nobody, betrayed those who trusted him, and grew fantastically paranoid. In 1979, as Wilungula B. Cosma, a Congolese historian who studied Kabila's failed "resistance" movement, writes, "he made the unpopular decision to kill all the sorcerers" in his domain:

> To this end, he concocted a potion of numerous roots and herbs. The potion was very strong, of a kind that made any physically weak person who swallowed it or received it in the eyes dizzy. Now, dizziness is an indication of sorcery. So everyone who manifested dizziness after this test was considered a sorcerer and had to be burned alive. At the end of the operation, two thousand people had been killed, ninety percent of whom were adults of advanced age.

This slaughter, coupled with the fact that "the victims of hunger became as numerous as those of the war," led to a mass flight of partisans from Kabila's zone. "Instead of social well-being for all, it was total immiserization for all," Wilungula notes, and Kabila, too, eventually went into exile. He spent a decade in East Africa, operating as an entrepreneur under various aliases, and he did not reappear on the Congolese scene until October of 1996, when he emerged first as a spokesman for, then as the leader of, the rebel alliance that finally carried him to the Presidency.

When Kabila arrived in Kinshasa in May of 1997, he cast himself as the emancipator of Congo from dictatorship. But, once again, the truth lay elsewhere, and he did not enjoy a hero's welcome. After all, the rebel alliance that had driven Mobutu into exile (where prostate cancer soon finished him) was organized and led by the Army of neighboring Rwanda and backed by neighboring Uganda. Its victorious sweep across the country had ultimately received the military or political support of at least ten other African governments. Rwanda's reason for fighting was paramount: in 1994, Mobutu had supported the Hutu Power leaders of the Rwandan genocide, which left at least eight hundred thousand Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus dead; and he continued to support the killers after they fled to United Nations-run camps just inside the Congolese border, helping them to regroup, rearm, and recruit a massive force with the aim of returning home to complete their extermination campaign. Major General Paul Kagame, the chief of Rwanda's predominantly Tutsi Army, told me at the time that his troops had moved into Congo in a political "marriage of convenience" with Kabila's rebel alliance, and that it was Rwandans who had led the fight against Mobutu and the *génocidaires* all the way to Kinshasa.

But years of rabid anti-Rwandan (and specifically anti-Tutsi) propaganda, spread by both Mobutu and his domestic critics, had had its effect. So, while Kabila spoke of "liberation," the Congolese spoke resentfully of being recolonized. Kinshasans, in particular, were galled to think that the destiny of their resource-rich land—which is the size of Western Europe—had been determined by a dirt-poor neighbor that is eighty-nine times smaller and nearly a thousand miles from Kinshasa. Kabila didn't even have his own army, and it didn't soothe the wounded national pride when he appointed a contingent of crack Rwandan fighters, on loan from General Kagame, to organize a new Congolese military. Many Kinshasans, glad as they were to be rid of Mobutu, were inclined to view Kabila as a political fossil, a usurper, and a quisling.

Still, Kabila was President, "like it or not," he himself said in his inaugural address, as he proclaimed an "order" that would be the "antithesis" of Mobutism. He promised justice, public accountability, economic renewal, an end to cronyism and the Old Man's *l'état c'est moi* cult of personality, and, within two years, democratic elections. Kabila gave no clue how he meant to achieve such wonders; nor did he inspire much confidence when he promptly banned all political activity, unleashed several competing security services with the authority to arrest people and seize property at will, and hired as his propaganda chief a Christian evangelist named Dominique Sakombi Inongo, who had served Mobutu in the same capacity for twenty-five years.

Sakombi was the man responsible for stringing the landscape with inspirational banners, and for erecting billboards featuring Kabila's massive head—portraits whose most striking feature is that they will not look you in the eye. Sakombi, however, is something of an anomaly in Kabila's Cabinet, inasmuch as he can be said to be qualified for his job. The general run of ministers is distinguished only by a level of incompetence that even inexperience cannot explain: "a bunch of mediocrities," a former Western political consultant to Kabila said. And he was speaking as a supporter of the regime.

Kabila, in using Mobutu as his foil, seemed to assume that things could not get worse than they had been, and the national prospect would be bad enough if he were right: stasis is always a kind of rot. But these days, when the Congolese express the desire for the country to return to "normal," they mean the way it was before Kabila came along. As a Congolese businessman said to me, "People here don't know what normal is. The word has become meaningless. What is called normal should be called unacceptable."

On the third anniversary of Kabila's assumption of power, a dispatch from the Panafrican News Agency reviewed Congo's condition like this:

> [B]asic infrastructure is in total decay. Major sections of trunk "A" roads . . . are not usable. Proposals for the rehabilitation of other facilities, such as hospitals, industries, manufacturing, and other structures, have also been stalled. On the social front, dirt and environmental decay have spewed all sorts of diseases. . . . Smallpox, diarrhea, sleeping sickness, among others, have come back in force while AIDS, malaria and poliomyelitis continue to devastate a population already weakened by under-nourishment. . . . More than 60 percent of the country's working population is not at work.

By the end of June, as the fortieth anniversary of Congolese independence from Belgian colonial rule was marked without popular celebration, the government-sponsored newspaper, *L'Avenir,* declared that the country was "still at step one." The independent daily *Le Potentiel* was not so optimistic. "Independence," it said, "has turned out to be a nightmare."

And, of course, Congo is at war. For a little more than two years, the armies of seven African nations and more than a dozen guerrilla and rebel forces have been fighting there, in a conflict so messy, so broad, and so resistant to any comprehensive resolution that it is sometimes spoken of as Africa's First World War. In fact, the current war is largely a continuation of the last war in Congo, a renewal of the continental upheaval brought on by the aftershocks of the Rwandan genocide.

The trouble this time started less than a year after Kabila's installation, when he turned against his Rwandan patrons and allied himself with his former Rwandan enemies: the renegade army and militias of the Hutu *génocidaires* (as many as thirty thousand fighters), who had scattered throughout neighboring countries, where many were once again living in U.N. refugee camps. Even by Congolese standards of political treachery, this was an astonishing turnaround. During Ka-

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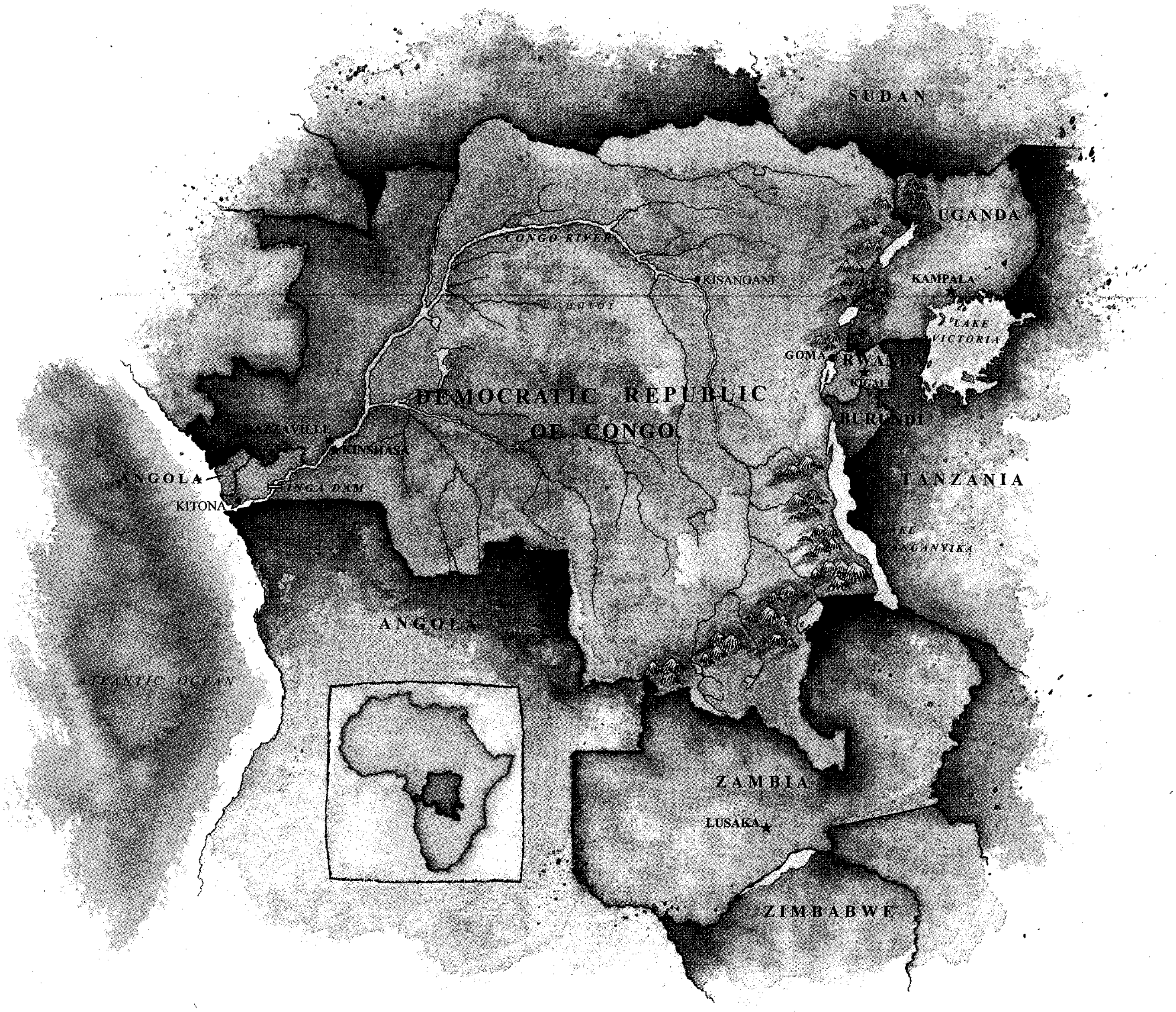
SODA



Congo has been split roughly in two, in a war involving seven nations; Kabila controls the west and his enemies occupy the east.

bila's rebellion, these Hutu Power outlaws had served as Mobutu's most vigorous defenders; and tens of thousands of them and their civilian followers had been slaughtered as they fled the Rwandan-led anti-Mobutist alliance, in massacres for which Kabila was widely condemned by international human-rights investigators.

Frictions between Kabila's Congolese entourage and the Rwandan military officers who had been charged with forming a new national Army had escalated, by early 1998, to a state of open hostility. But, notwithstanding the enemy-of-my-enemy-is-my-friend logic that dominates central-African politics, Kabila's sudden embrace of Hutu Power baffled even his Ambassador to the United States, Faida Mitifu, who told me recently, "I don't see how our government can associate itself with the authors of the 1994 genocide." At the very least, in repeating Mobutu's fatal error, Kabila had to recognize the magnitude of the provocation he was presenting to Rwanda. Sure enough, in late July of 1998, Rwanda withdrew its forces from Congo in an orderly fashion, only to return with a vengeance on August 2nd, launching a commando invasion and sponsoring a new Congolese rebellion, with the explicit objective of taking Kabila out.

Despite Rwanda's size, General Kagame, who became the country's President in April, has built its Army into the most formidable fighting force in central Africa, and he has done so without recourse to sophisticated weaponry. Rather, what distinguishes his commanders and soldiers is their ferocious motivation. Having single-handedly brought the genocide to a halt, in 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Army has continued to treat its almost ceaseless battlefield engagements as one long struggle for national survival. (The analogy that's sometimes made between Rwanda's aggressive defense policy and that of Israel—another small country with a vivid memory of genocide which has endured persistent threats of annihilation from its neighbors—is inexact but not unfounded.) During the war against Mobutu, Rwanda's soldiers astonished the world by traversing nearly a thousand miles of Congo's jungles on foot in just seven months. But when they came after Kabila the Rwandans made that look like slow motion.

The operation was led by James Kabarebe, a Rwandan colonel who, until a few weeks earlier, had been serving

MIKE REAGAN

Kabila as the chief of staff of the Congolese Army. So Kabarebe knew the terrain, and on the third day of the campaign, as Rwandan troops poured over the frontier, he commandeered a Congolese transport plane in the eastern city of Goma, loaded it with soldiers, and flew twelve hundred miles to the Atlantic coast to land at a military base called Kitona, where he induced several thousand local soldiers to mutiny and join him in a sweep toward Kinshasa. Along the way, this force seized control of the Inga dam, a hydroelectric facility that powers Kinshasa, and, with the flip of a switch, the city was plunged into darkness. Less than three weeks after the invasion began, Kabarebe's men were on the outskirts of the capital, and the *Times* was reporting that the Kabila era could be over within a few days.

The dazzling tactical stuntsmanship of the Rwandan blitzkrieg was stimulated, in large part, by the fact that from the moment the war began the Kabila government, incapable of mounting a coherent battlefield defense, had resorted to whipping up a propaganda campaign that identified all Tutsis as enemies and instructed the Congolese citizenry to wipe them out. Never mind that Tutsis made up less than one per cent of Congo's population; the language that suddenly streamed over state radio was virtually indistinguishable from the Hutu Power broadcasts that had driven the massacres in Rwanda in 1994. People were urged to take up any weapon they could find—"machetes, spears, arrows, hoes, spades, rakes, nails, truncheons, irons, barbed wire, stones, and the like"—and "kill the Rwandan Tutsis." Kabila himself spoke of this effort to extirpate the Tutsi-led rebels as a "popular war," and, sadly, for once he was right. In the first weeks of the pogrom, civilian mobs, escorted by police and soldiers, swept through Kinshasa, hunting down the city's tiny Tutsi population; dozens were murdered, and hundreds were taken hostage in military camps.

"It was an extraordinary thing," a longtime American resident of Kinshasa recalled. "Ordinary people, who wanted to defend their country against foreign aggression, just tore into anyone who was unknown to them, any out-of-towner. A guy would come along asking how to get to the airport and someone would say, 'Ah! Why don't you know the way? I've never seen you before. Infiltrator! Rebel!' And he'd be finished." A celebratory film clip that ran on Congolese state television that August showed three men carrying a fourth man—tall and skinny, like the stereotypical Tutsi—slung between them by his arms and legs, then swinging him over the railing of a bridge, letting him go, and shooting at him as he fell. Such was the patriotic spirit that had been harbored against Kabila when he was seen as a Rwandan pawn, and that, with thuggish ingenuity, he now rallied in his support as he faced what appeared to be imminent defeat.

Kabila himself had vacated Kinshasa in the second week of the war, sparking rumors that he was preparing to flee. Those rumors stopped, however, in the last weeks of August, when Angola and Zimbabwe, unhappy with Rwanda's unilateral intervention, suddenly sent their armies into Congo to fight on Kabila's behalf. A few days later, as Colonel Kabarebe—outgunned by Kabila's new defenders, who came with tanks and aircraft—retreated from Kinshasa, Uganda deployed additional troops, joining its old ally Rwanda on the eastern front. Soon, Namibia joined the pro-government forces, as did Chad for a time, and Burundi fell in with the Rwandans and the Ugandans, while various guerrilla armies from around the continent also took sides in the fray. In this way, the Pan-African alliance that had come together to put Kabila in power divided against itself, and the country, too, was soon split roughly in two, with Kabila and his defenders controlling the western half, and the forces arrayed against him occupying the east. And so Congo has remained for the past twenty-four months, a place that does not resemble a country so much as an all-purpose African battlefield.

Yet in Kinshasa, whenever I asked people how things were going, they would complain first about the economic collapse and Congo's history of abysmal government, and only then would they mention the war—as if it were more a symptom than a cause of the country's woes. "The war is instrumentalized by the regime as a pretext, an alibi, to justify all the deficits and abuses of leadership and rights, and also the failings on the socioeconomic level," said Floribert Chebeya, the president of Congo's oldest human-rights advocacy group, the Voice of the Voiceless. "Kabila really needed the war because his relations with all his foreign allies were bad, and the people rejected him."

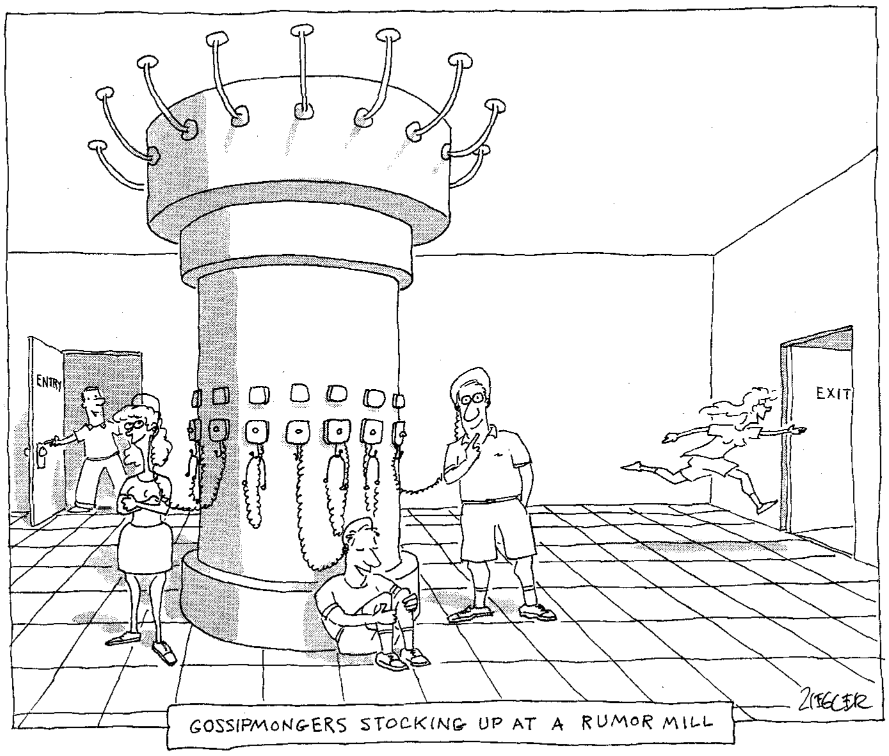
Modeste Mutinga, the editor of *Le Potentiel*, agreed. "The legitimacy of Kabila is based on coming to power by arms, and that legitimacy has been contradicted by the fact that those arms are now turned against us and the country is split in two," he told me, adding, "So let's solve that—restore the integrity of the national territory—and we'll deal with the problem of Kabila afterward. Because who brought the Ugandans and Rwandans in here in the first place? He did." Yet the problem remained: the war, which was a result of Kabila's weakness as a leader, had made him stronger. "The war does legitimize him a little," a writer in Kinshasa said. "So we must ask, Do these leaders really want peace?"

Efforts to end the fighting in Congo got under way almost as soon as the war began. But the realignments of forces in the combat kept outpacing the diplomatic initiatives, which also seemed to multiply uncontrollably. The conflict in Congo had become what Lewis Carroll might have called a portmanteau war—a collection of wars folded together. And, while the search for a resolution to each of these sub-wars requires that they be examined on their own terms, they are now so mixed up with one another that they cannot be resolved unless they are also treated collectively.

So it was considered a great triumph, last summer, when the heads of state of the six countries with major troop deployments still engaged on Congolese territory—Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Congo itself—as well as the leaders of the main Congolese rebel factions, signed a peace accord in Lusaka, Zambia. The centerpiece of the Lusaka accord was a call for the deployment of an aggressive United Nations peacekeeping force, charged with supervising the withdrawal of foreign troops from Congolese territory, and the disarming of the Hutu Power *génocidaires* and a host of other foreign and domestic guerrilla groups operating in the country, which are collectively referred to in the accord as "negative forces." At the same time, Lusaka mandated that the Congolese rebels and the Kabila regime should engage in a process of "national dialogue," with the aim of establishing a transitional power-sharing arrangement and, eventually, a new national government.

The appeal of the Lusaka accord was that it identified and addressed the chief causes of the Congo war broadly enough to give everyone who signed it something to be thankful for. But the accord's ambitious comprehensiveness was also its greatest weakness. As an American diplomat I met in Kinshasa put it, "Lusaka, while laudable, imagines a process to make this place a real working country, which in the best case will take centuries." In the meantime, a year after the accord went into effect, not one of its goals has been met, and the Congolese people have suffered accordingly. A comparative study of prewar and postwar mortality rates, published recently by the International Rescue Committee, found that since 1998 the Congo war has led directly (through violence) or indirectly (through displacement, and the hunger and disease that go with it) to the deaths of 1.7 million men, women, and children. The report argued persuasively that this figure was probably conservative, and that casualty rates in areas controlled by pro-Kabila forces and in zones occupied by his enemies were essentially equal.

Yet, while all the sides in the Congo war have violated the pledges they made at Lusaka—and the U.N., for its part, has yet to send more than a skeleton crew of some two hundred military observers to the country—the Kabila government has been alone in repudiating the peace accord outright. In late August, after a year of nearly non-stop obstruction of the peace process, Kabila simply declared that the Lusaka accord was no longer valid, because it did not pay sufficient respect to Congolese sovereignty. Within two days, Kabila had reversed himself again, saying that he would welcome the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force, but by then even his allies no longer believed him. "There is no commitment to Lusaka from this government, and not much from the other side," an exasperated official at the U.N. peacekeeping office in Kinshasa told me. "Here they don't even pretend. They keep asking to renegotiate the deal, declaring it illegitimate, mocking it." And, the U.N. official went on, "Kabila and his people constantly stand us up for meetings. They yell at us. They orchestrate so-called popular protests against us. But there's no real unity in this country, even within the government. One guy says one thing, the other says the opposite. Look, the U.N. mission here is inadequate, badly organized, weak, and probably not really serious itself. Anything bad you want to say about it, I could tell you worse. But even the super-best mission in the world would be stuck here with a government that is afraid of peace."



GOSSIPMONGERS STOCKING UP AT A RUMOR MILL

I got a taste of what the U.N. man was talking about on my last night in Kinshasa, when I met with Yerodia Abdoulaye Ndombasi, a Lacanian psychoanalyst, who lived and practiced in Paris for nearly thirty years and is now Kabila's Foreign Minister. He received me at his office in the Palace of the Nation, a vast concrete block built by Mobutu in the overbearing Fascist style of architecture favored by Romania's Ceauşescu. The place sits alone in a deserted corner of the city, surrounded by a black wrought-iron fence and several acres of empty parking lots; its massive plate-glass windows are filthy and cracked, and the red carpets on its oversize staircases are in tatters.

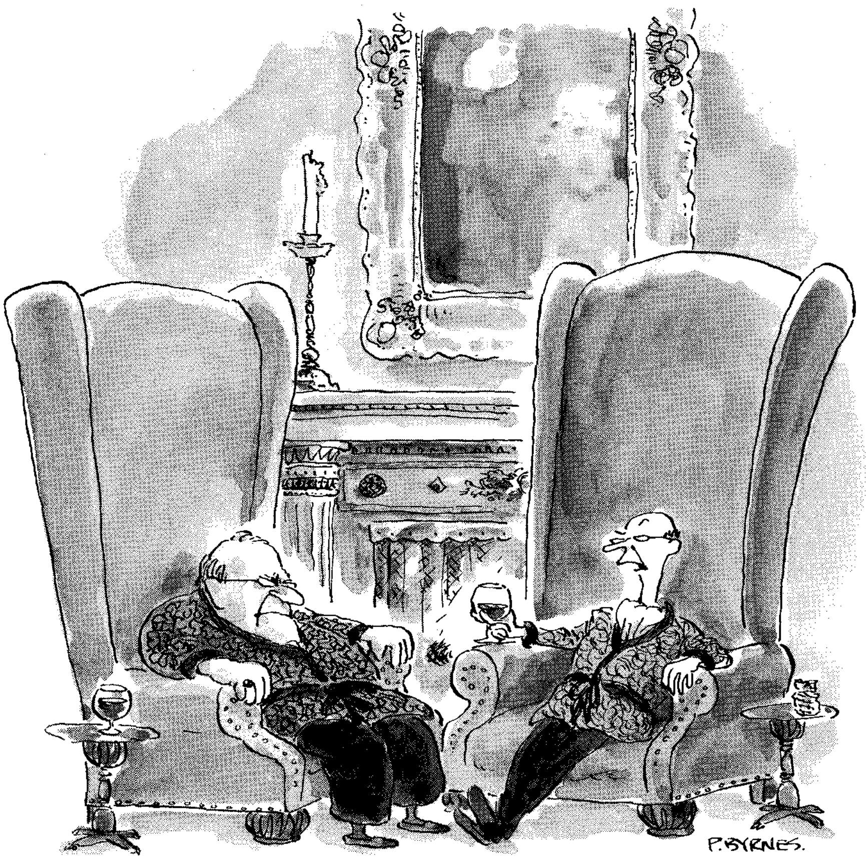
Yerodia, a short, potbellied man, with a highly mobile range of odd expressions and a reputation as a bombastic and erratic orator, was wearing Beatle boots and a vest of his own design, with no collar and a couple of long, narrow breast pockets for holding cigars. A bodyguard carried his briefcase as he ushered me along ill-lit halls, through a padded privacy door, and into his office. There Yerodia proceeded to tell me that the war in Congo, as a war of foreign aggression and occupation, violates the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, he said, the Lusaka accord, by recognizing the aggressors as parties to the peace process, is itself "not in accord with the U.N. Charter." As a young man, Yerodia had been a Congolese revolutionary, fighting against the U.N. in the post-independence rebellions that Che Guevara helped to organize. But now he held forth as if he were the last true champion of U.N. tradition. "Was there an aggression or not?" he shouted at me. "Were there countries that crossed the border to occupy another country? Yes or no?" Then, more calmly, he said that Congo had signed at Lusaka "because we want the war to end." And he said, "You see our good faith?"

As for Rwanda, Yerodia said, "You

know the fable of the frog who wants to become a bull?” He recited the comparative size of the two countries in square kilometres and said that Rwanda was simply gobbling up Congolese territory in a fit of expansionist gluttony. He scoffed at the notion that Rwanda had moved into Congo to defend itself against a Hutu Power threat. Fugitive *génocidaires* could also be found throughout Europe, he said, and asked, “Why don’t they go occupy France, from Dunkirk to Marseilles?”

Yerodia’s mean-spiritedness about the genocide didn’t surprise me. During the first weeks of the war, he had been one of the most prominent government leaders to rally the masses to carry out an anti-Tutsi pogrom. At the time, he was the chief of Kabila’s Cabinet, and, when he called on the people to “crush” the “vermin” and the “cockroaches,” he had been clearly understood. For nearly forty years, “cockroach” has been a code word for Tutsis in Rwanda, and since the genocide its usage has spread throughout the region. (In early July of this year, a Belgian court issued an international arrest warrant against Yerodia for inciting racial hatred and genocide against Tutsis in August of 1998.) I wondered why Yerodia, as a psychoanalyst who was clearly sensitive to language, had become a cheerleader for terror.

“Because a psychoanalyst must refuse rabble,” Yerodia said. “A psychoanalyst can’t perform miracles. When there are rabble, one has to condemn them to be rabble, and the psychoanalyst can do nothing. And when one says ‘vermin’—and I repeat again, these are vermin—a vermin is something that introduces itself insidiously into a body, or a piece of wood, or a plant, or clothes, and moves on. That’s what they did.” He made no apologies. “I refer you to Foucault. You’ll see that, before using a word, you must look at the thing the word describes,” he said, recalling how children had died in the hospitals of Kinshasa during the blackouts imposed by the Rwandans. “These things—how would you call them, you defender of human rights? Five million people here, and the spigots ran dry, because the electricity was cut. The people had to drink dirty water from the river, with all that implies.” Yerodia said that his own home village had been burned down by the invaders. “I tell you these things so that you can comprehend the weakness of this word”—vermin—“in relation to the gravity of the things it describes,” he said, and added, “I’m a psychoanalyst. I know what exclusion is.”

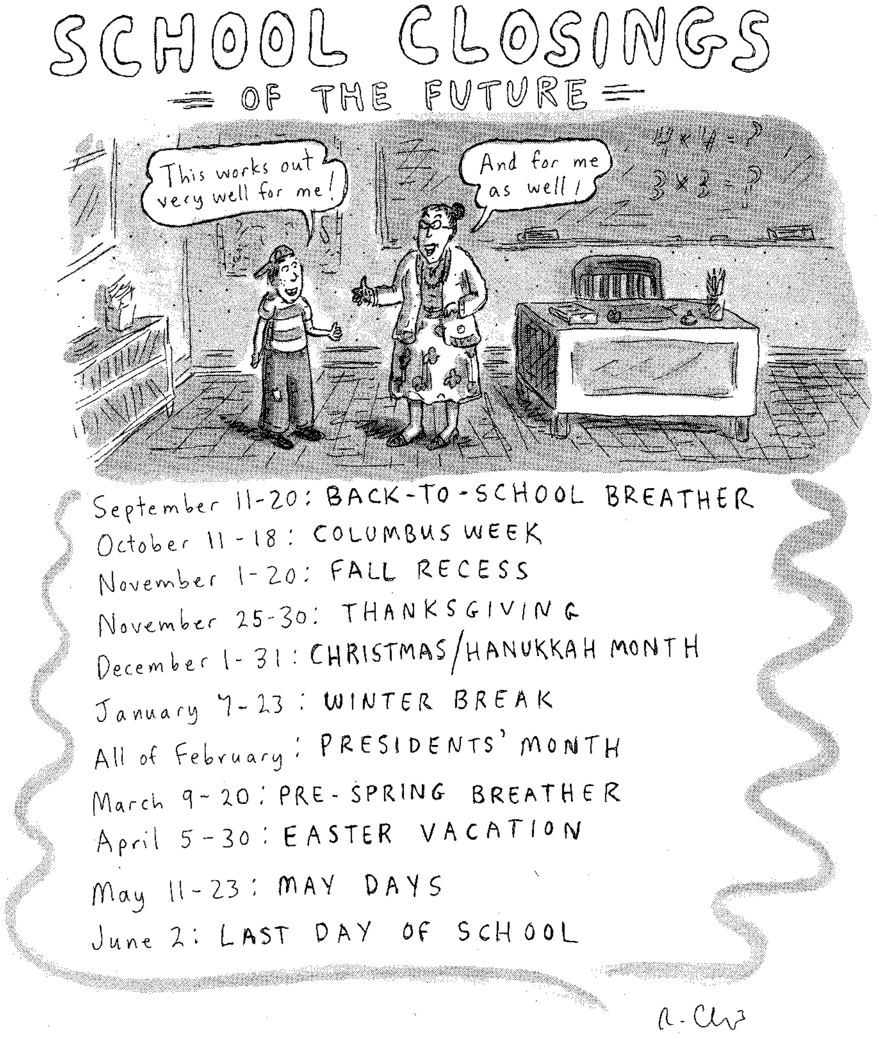


“ ‘Release the hounds!’ That’s your anwer to everything.”

On the road to Kinshasa’s Ndjili Airport, just after dawn, the crowds waiting for transport, and the roadside signboards—a raised fist clutching a sword, and the legend “To vanquish the aggressor is a sacred duty,” or “Peace has a price. Peace must be won”—looked almost festive in the soft, hazy light. I knew that foreigners, and especially foreign journalists, were regularly arrested at the airport, accused of spying or money smuggling (the regime had outlawed the use of foreign currency, and my insoles were stuffed with dollars). But I was in good hands. For twenty contraband dollars, I had hired a “facilitator” to steer me through the airport. The man came highly recommended; he had been a top immigration official in the Mobutu years, and as he told me, “The system hasn’t changed much.”

With a wave here and a commanding nod there, my facilitator arranged for our car to zip through several security gates and deposit us directly at the door to the departure area. For a moment, before getting out, he surveyed the scene, which was one of pure chaos: domestic-flight passengers scrambling through a twenty-foot gantlet of uniformed agents from several different security services, who pushed men and groped women, reaching into their bags or knocking their luggage to the ground and examining the spilled contents. Then, just as a woman with a bursting carton of frozen chickens was slapped in the face, my facilitator said, “Follow me,” and with his left fist, full of Congolese francs, extended in front of him, and the other clamped firmly around my suitcase at his side, he ducked from the car, head down but smiling ingratiatingly, and plunged straight through the one clear passage into the terminal, with me hard on his tail.

So it went: with a few banknotes shed every twenty feet, no more than five dollars in all, he spirited me through pass-


SCHOOL CLOSINGS
OF THE FUTURE
This works out very well for me!
And for me as well!
4 × 4 = ?
3 × 3 = ?
September 11-20: BACK-TO-SCHOOL BREATHER
October 11-18: COLUMBUS WEEK
November 1-20: FALL RECESS
November 25-30: THANKSGIVING
December 1-31: CHRISTMAS/HANUKKAH MONTH
January 7-23: WINTER BREAK
All of February: PRESIDENTS' MONTH
March 9-20: PRE-SPRING BREATHER
April 5-30: EASTER VACATION
May 11-23: MAY DAYS
June 2: LAST DAY OF SCHOOL

• •

port control, check-in, and customs in fifteen minutes flat, while around me I watched sweating men and women endure hour-long shakedowns as their passports disappeared for "closer inspection" or their luggage was rifled through, sock by sock. Nobody opened my suitcase. My facilitator even made it a point of pride, despite my protests about security, not to allow my carry-on bag to pass through the X-ray machine. "It's beneath you," he said. And when we were settled in the departure lounge, sipping Cokes, he told me, "You see how it works. People aren't paid. They just want a little tip for their service, and then everything runs perfectly."

I was on my way to Rwanda, through the old colonial hub of Brussels. It was an absurdly roundabout route, but at the Congolese mission in New York I had been warned against carrying anything to Kinshasa that might associate me with the enemy: a passport with Rwandan or Ugandan stamps, an airline ticket to those places, or maps of them, or phone lists of contacts in them, or any printed matter that mentioned them. "You will surely be arrested, and eventually deported," I was told. So I had left my Rwandan kit in Brussels, and I didn't mind ducking briefly out of Africa.

As the plane descended over Belgium, the world's nearly perfect unfairness flashed up at me through the clouds: enchanting tiled roofs, bicyclists and Lego-bright trucks whizzing along neat ribbons of macadam, trees in rows, so Euclidean, and a red-helmeted equestrian, trotting in a ring of groomed dirt.

"What war?" a longtime Rwandan acquaintance of mine said when I told him why I was back in Kigali. He waved a hand around his head loosely, in a gesture at once dismissive and all-inclusive. "This country's at peace," he said. Over the years, I had known this man to be an accurate barometer of the prevailing attitudes of Kigali's post-genocide Tutsi establishment. He was well connected to the ruling party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, and an admirer of General Kagame, but I remembered him as being more of a loyal critic than a booster of the government's military adventures. He was also passionate about Congo; as a young man, he had been a refugee there, and had attended university there, and when we first met, in Kigali four years ago, he was fond of saying, "My blood makes me Rwandan, but my heart's in Congo." So I was surprised to hear him say of the war, "It's not an issue here. We must have security. We want the *génocidaires*. We want every one of them, and we must do what it takes." He nodded sombrely at his nine-year-old daughter, who was skipping around in the yard, and told me, "I am thinking of her survival."

It was true that the war in Congo had brought a measure of peace to Rwanda. When I last visited the country, three years ago, Hutu Power guerrillas, who had returned from the U.N. border camps, were terrorizing both Tutsis and Hutus in large patches of the country. The killings were constant, particularly in the Hutu Power heartland, in the northwest. The Rwandan Army fought back, mounting a counterinsurgency campaign that also claimed many lives and left more than half a million civilians displaced. It wasn't until the invasion of Congo, in August of 1998, that security was restored throughout the land. From the Rwandan side of the border, then, the Congo war was seen as a classic buffer-zone conflict, and to my old acquaintance the relief it brought was all that mattered. But didn't the bloody occupation of eastern Congo carry a heavy price for Rwanda—at the very least, a loss of the moral high ground?

"So the world hates us," he said. "So to hell with them."

The sense of fatalism I had experienced in Kinshasa, where people seemed to view the war as a circumstance beyond their control, was replaced in Kigali by a spirit of militant survivalism which could seem equally depressing. "The lesson of the genocide is that either we are able to organize ourselves and look after ourselves or we perish," General Kagame's veteran aide and spokesman, Emmanuel Ndahiro, told me, adding, "The reason we went into Congo the first time had nothing to do with Kabila, and Kabila did not solve the problems we went in to solve, so we went in again. We had no legitimacy the first time and we went in without legitimacy this time. We went just using force, and if we had had no force to use we would be destroyed."

Of course, Ndahiro acknowledged, mistakes had been made as a result of this attitude, and the biggest mistake was Kabila. "During the first Congo war, nobody here was seriously interested in the politics—in who would take over Congo. Everything was military," he said, adding that the Rwandans had realized only after the fact that Kabila had "used" them to become a new dictator. "And he just kept using us," Ndahiro said.

I had spent a lot of time in Rwanda after the genocide, and I had never heard a top Rwandan Army man complain of being outwitted by an adversary. But James Kabarebe, the Rwandan colonel who had served as Kabila's army chief before leading the commando raid on Kinshasa in August of 1998, told me the same story. "Kabila was never a puppet," he said. "I could never do anything that Kabila didn't want." On the contrary, Kabarebe said, "Kabila twisted us the way he wanted," and he added, "Kabila is an experienced con man, an intriguer, and a shrewd person. When he wants to humble himself, he will humble himself and achieve what he wants. When he wants to come out and become aggressive and dangerous, he will prepare for it and he will do so. He's a bully, and he believes in coercion."

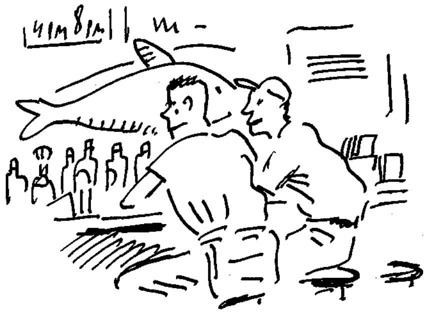
If the Rwandans had made such a mistake in installing Kabila, I wondered how they had intended to go about replacing him if their blitzkrieg on Kinshasa wasn't repelled. Kabarebe said a primary objective of that campaign had been to rescue the endangered Congolese Tutsis there. "But what if you had taken the city?" I asked. "What was the political plan?" Kabarebe thought about this for a moment. "The political plan?" he said. "The most important thing was that Kabila would have gone."

General Kagame was equally vague about the original political objectives of the Congo war. He regretted that "the takeover of Kinshasa" had "failed narrowly," but he didn't think that meant it had been wrong to try. "If we had succeeded, it would have meant saving a lot of trouble for a lot of people—even for the Congolese. A new leadership could have been easily put in," Kagame told me, and he added, "Having learned from the experience of Kabila, the story would have been different this time."

Listening to him, I couldn't help recalling how optimistic he had been when we last met, in 1997, a few weeks after Kabila had taken power. Kagame, who is as skinny as Kabila is round, tends to speak with a dry, wraithlike directness, but on that occasion he had seemed almost jubilant, chuckling freely as he argued that armed struggle shouldn't be seen only as a cause of Africa's problems but also as a means of resolving them. "Actually, some conflicts consume less lives than bad systems and create better situations," he had said, and he told me that the success of the Pan-African alliance that had come together in Congo gave him "a great amount of satisfaction." Now the members of that alliance were at one another's throats, and it sounded as if Kagame had no idea how to get out of Congo. I wondered if he ever regretted getting in there in the first place.

No, he said. He reminded me that Rwanda had not created the trouble in Congo but had reacted to trouble that Mobutu had created by sponsoring the *génocidaires*. "We did what we ought to have done at that time," Kagame said, and added, "Today, of course, we find ourselves in a different situation, but again with a sense of great achievement as well. Look at the internal situation here in Rwanda, the very fact that there is peace." And, he said, "It doesn't matter that we are still involved in a war somewhere else. This is part of the price we have to continue paying. We are glad to do that."

I suggested that the way things were going it looked as if Rwanda might be in the Congo for at least ten more years. Kagame, who is only forty-two years old, seemed to consider this a modest proposal. "It will be O.K. if we have to be there for very long," he said.



One evening last spring, I was discussing the Congo war with two top Rwandan Army officers on a hotel terrace in Kigali when both of their cell phones began ringing. They took the calls in Kinyarwanda, the language of the country, then exchanged a few words with each other before easing back into English. "Idiotic," one of them said. "Absurd," said the other. "Jerks," said the first. "Thugs," said the second. They spoke in sepulchral, whispery tones, which is the style among Rwandan commanders—blunt, world-weary, bleak, and vaguely bemused—but their distress was clear. They had just received word that the Ugandan Army was massing troops in the Congolese city of Kisangani. "What are they up to, our Ugandan brothers?" the first officer said, and the second said, "Mischief."

Rwanda and Uganda were once close allies. The Rwandan Patriotic Front had been founded in Uganda, in the late eighties, by Rwandan refugees who had grown up there and had learned to fight in the Army of President Yoweri Museveni. General Kagame had once served as Museveni's chief of military intelligence, and the friendship between the two men was one of the defining features of central-African political life in the past decade. It was Museveni who had introduced Kabila to Kagame in 1994, and although the Ugandan Army had little involvement in the war against Mobutu, Museveni had been Kagame's first and most important ally in that campaign.

But since Uganda joined Rwanda in the fight against Kabila, in 1998, and their armies each seized control of large swaths of eastern Congo, relations between the two countries and their leaders have steadily deteriorated. The first blatant sign of discord came early last year, after they began sponsoring competing Congolese rebel factions. But it was in Kisangani, where the two countries had attempted to run a joint occupation, that things fell apart. In August of 1999, the Rwandan and the Ugandan forces in Kisangani turned their guns on each other, in a bitter four-day battle in the city center which neither side has ever been able to explain, except by accusing the other of pettiness, treachery, indiscipline, and of firing the first shot. Rwanda prevailed in the combat, which left as many as four hundred dead, most of them Ugandans. But it was impossible to speak meaningfully of victory in a mindless feud that had disgraced both countries—and now it looked as if they would fight again.

"These Ugandans want to get even," one of the Rwandan officers on the hotel terrace said. He reminded me that it was his Army that had captured the city from Kabila's forces, only then inviting the Ugandans to share it, and he said, "One does not just walk away quietly from such a prize." Kisangani, after all, is Congo's third-largest city, a major diamond-trading center, the commercial hub of the east, the upstream terminus of Congo River boat lines, the gateway to the capital, and—more symbolically but no less importantly—a place where Congolese history has a way of coming to its defining crises. "We can leave it only if Uganda leaves, too," the officer said, and added, "It's the biggest ego war, very stupid. So we would wish to avoid it, but if they hit us we shall hit them, and this time they can lose very badly." The other officer hummed in agreement. "It's an interesting time in Kisangani," he told me. "I'll find you a flight."

Two days later, I was ushered aboard a dubious-looking relic of the Soviet Air Force, a forty-year-old twin-prop Antonov-8 that was flown by a duly scarred and angry pair of Ukrainians, and loaded with wooden crates containing several tons of automatic-rifle ammunition and artillery rounds. Looking down, as we flew west and slightly northward out of Kigali, the intricate patchwork of Rwanda's relentlessly cultivated hills and valleys soon gave way to a solid green sea of Congolese jungle, and for the next hour and a half that was all—a canopy of towering trees, broken here and there by the dull, winding glint of a murky brown river, and occasionally by a half-mile-long stripe of red dirt, flanked by a few huts, which suggested a road and a village, or an attempt at a road and a village. But the huts looked abandoned, and the roads connected nothing to nowhere.

Kisangani materialized out of this

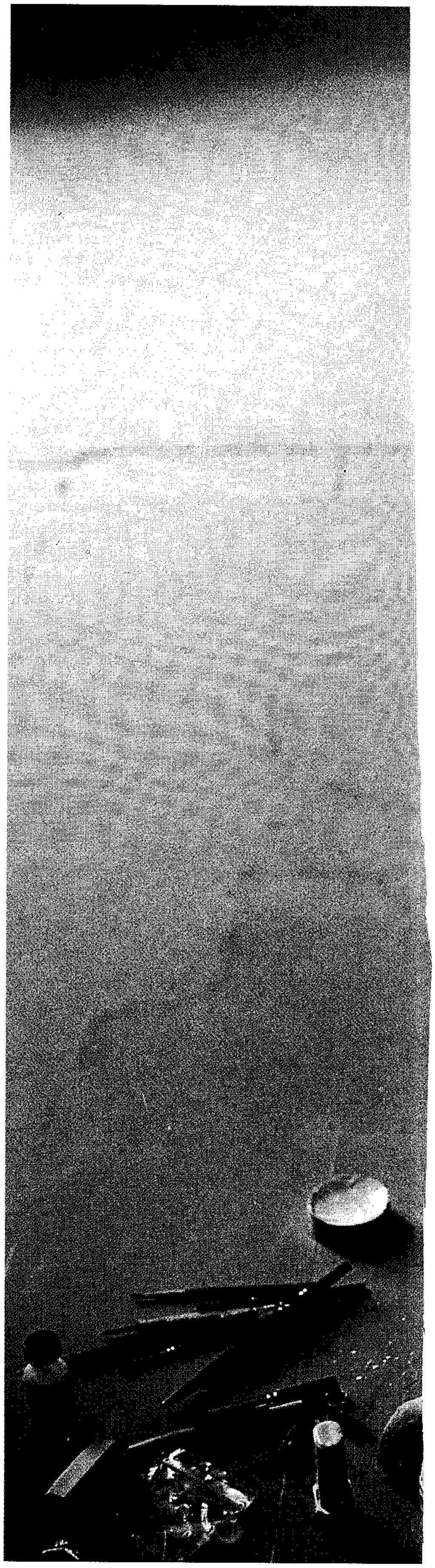
AT THE GALLERIES

THE NAKED TRUTH

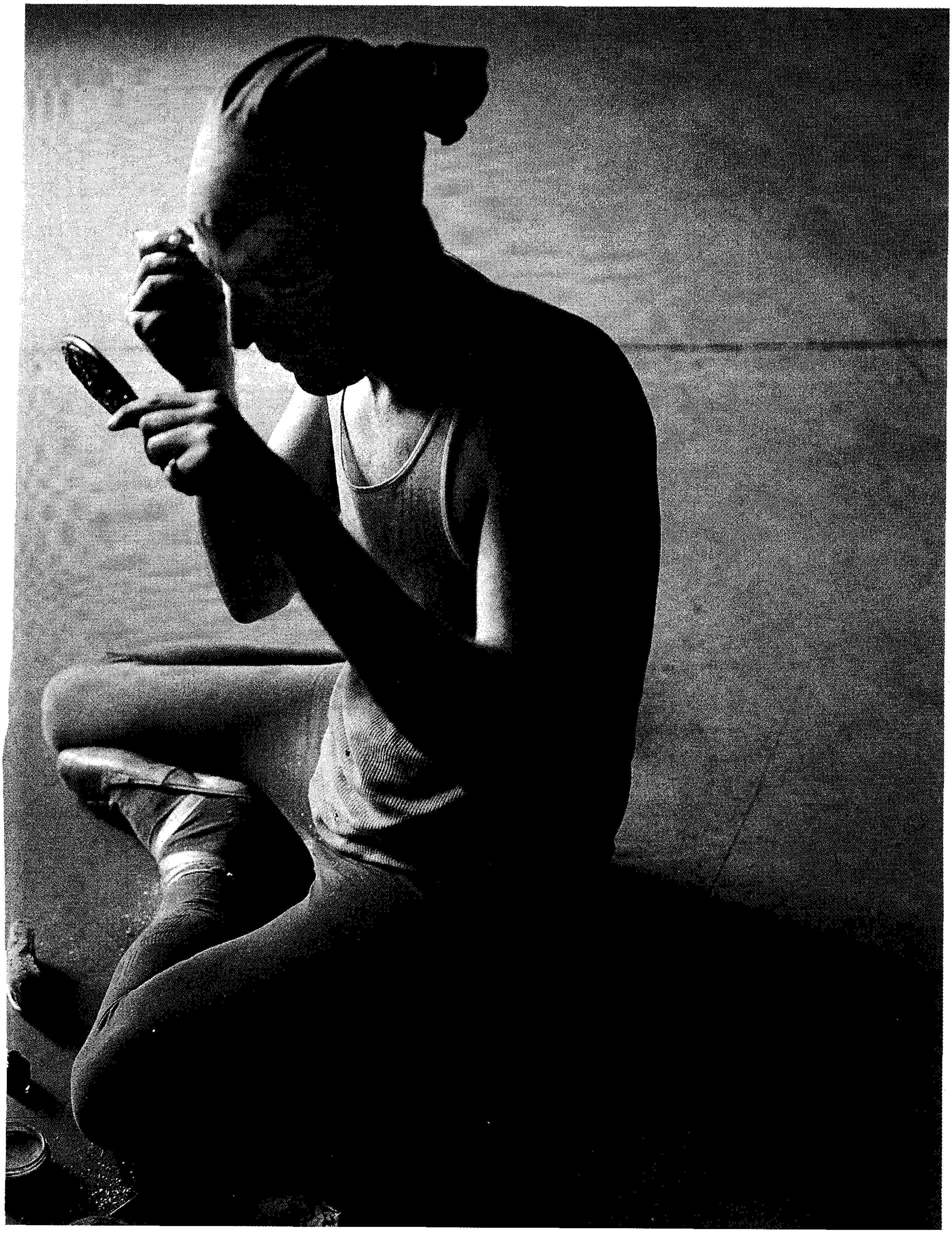
One of several portraits of Ethyl Eichelberger in a new exhibition of the late work of Peter Hujar shows a serious, thoughtful man in a sports jacket, gazing serenely at the photographer. Eichelberger is better known as a zany and flamboyant figure who appeared, more often than not in drag, in performance spaces in downtown New York in the nineteen-seventies and eighties. An actor, composer, writer, fire-eater, accordion player, tumbler, and wigmaker, he specialized in playing female historical figures—Clytemnestra, Medea, Lola Montez, Nefertiti. In his adaptation of the Ariadne story, he took on the roles of Theseus and Bacchus, plus a mermaid on roller skates. He appeared in several of Charles Ludlam's plays for the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, most memorably "The Artificial Jungle," in which Eichelberger's character, Mrs. Nurdiger, did an awe-inspiring back flip in high heels before succumbing to a stroke.

Peter Hujar photographed many performers and artists, most of them his friends, and they are often seen in unself-conscious repose. Even his animal portraits suggest a certain psychological intimacy. He gained attention in the early seventies with a series of homoerotic nudes that influenced the work of Robert Mapplethorpe, but his photographs don't have either the sensational hard edges or the manipulated prettiness of Mapplethorpe's. They are beautifully and simply composed, austere, and unpretentious. Hujar, who influenced many other photographers more famous than he, including Nan Goldin, died of AIDS in 1987, six months after the death of Charles Ludlam and a year and a half before Mapplethorpe died. Ethyl Eichelberger died in 1990.

—*Sharon DeLano*



"Ethyl Eichelberger Applying Makeup" (1982),

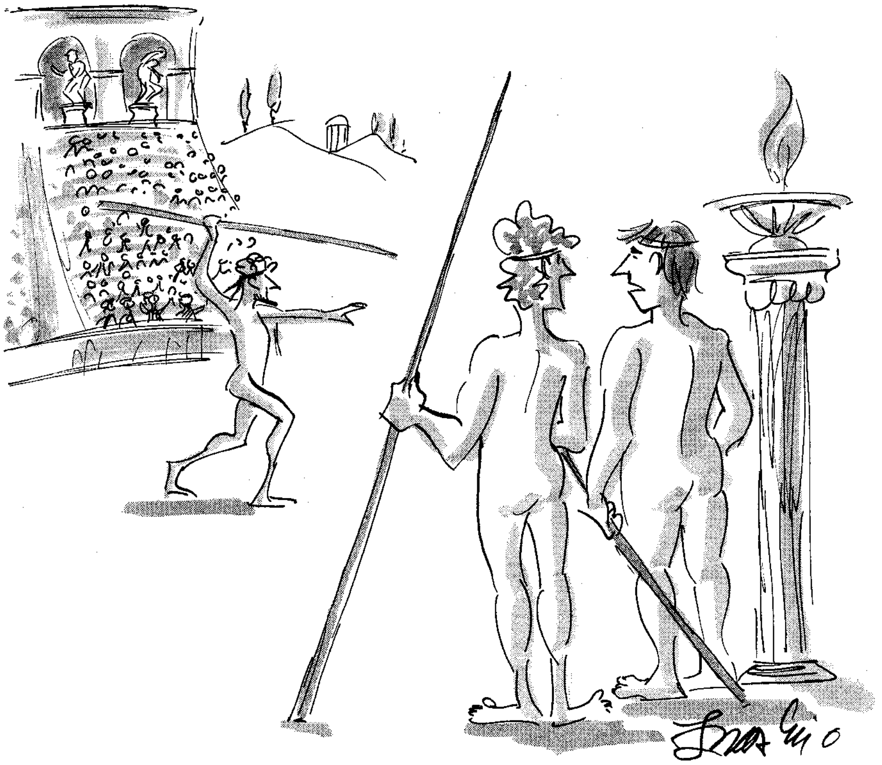


by Peter Hujar, is one of more than eighty of Hujar's photographs in a show at the Matthew Marks Gallery in Chelsea.

wilderness at what seemed like the last possible moment in the Antonov's descent. I have never been anywhere lonelier. It had the look of an important city, spread out long and wide against the great bend in the Congo River. And it had a major city's self-important sense of design and display: ambitiously broad streets lined with old trees and grand buildings with deep porches, Italianate turrets, and Art Deco curves, a century-old cathedral perched on a knoll overlooking the riverbank, an impressive port crowded with cranes and warehouses. It even had some of the carnival sass and mercantile swagger that a true city requires at its center, where block after block of massive whitewashed storefront diamond-trading parlors were brightly painted with icons of twinkling blue gems or rippling hundred-dollar bills, and business names like Oasis, Top Correction, Force Tranquille, and Jihad. And yet Kisangani did not feel like a city—more like the memory of a city.

I arrived at five on a weekday afternoon—rush hour—and it may as well have been Sunday at dawn. There were plenty of people along the roadside, walking, bicycling, carrying loads, selling and buying, standing and talking, but, still, the streets felt empty, and everything appeared to be happening in slow motion. It wasn't just that the place was old—essentially undeveloped since the end of Belgian colonial rule, in 1960—or in decay: gutted university halls behind lawns of waist-high weeds; battered, cracked, and crumbling municipal buildings; bushes sprouting from the damp concrete of hotel roofs; rusting, faded signs for things that were no longer there, such as a Mobil station—a flaking red Pegasus leaping into the steamy jungle air. I've seen far more ancient cities, and cities in much deeper ruin, that thrum with life. Even in Kinshasa, one felt a constant surge of urban energy amid the presiding atmosphere of blight. Stuntedness and degeneration hardly distinguished Kisangani.

No, what made it strange was its quietness. During the course of a twenty-minute drive across the city, I saw only three other vehicles on the road, and when I stopped and the engine was cut there were no other sounds of machinery to be heard. In the middle of a major intersection, in the center of town, you could hear a quavering laugh in a distant room, the creak of a metal gate two blocks away, bare feet and bicycle tires swishing over the pavement. Here was a city of more than half a million people, in a country at war, moving in the bright, hot hush of a ghostly enchantment, at once premodern and postapocalyptic.



"If we weren't bare-assed we'd really clean up on sportswear endorsements."

"This is a dying town," a Rwandan major in Kisangani told me. The house he occupied made the point for him. It was a classic nineteen-sixties split-level, and in more promising times it had served as the British consulate. A heavy, oval-shaped enamel plaque ornamented with the lion and unicorn lay on a bar in the entryway; reproductions of equestrian and nautical paintings hung on wood-panelled walls, alongside a satin pendant from a Rotary Club in Belgium; and the stripped metal carcasses of two vintage MG sports coupés rusted in the carport. The major sat in a vintage butterfly lawn chair, surrounded by mosquitoes in the gloom of a single dim light bulb, slowly drinking a carton of milk. He had a habit of repeating his own phrases with slight variations, and after a while he said, "Yes, this again is a dying town." I wondered what he meant by "again," and he told me, "It died first under the Belgians, it died after independence, it died under Mobutu, it died under Kabila, and now we are here with the Ugandans, and it dies." After all, he said, "Our first purpose in Congo is to insure the security of Rwanda, and in that we have not failed. But we also say we've come here to mobilize the Congolese for political change, and with this we are not succeeding. Uganda explains its purposes the same way. So how do we call ourselves allies when we are fighting each other, and not organizing the Congolese?"

The Congolese I spoke with all asked similar questions: What's wrong with these foreigners? Why must they fight here? What do they want with us? Earlier in the week, rumors of impending trouble had left the city largely deserted, and although the panic had eased, everyone had stories of troops converging on the city from the surrounding bush. A priest at the cathedral told me that some of his colleagues had found the road north of Kisangani "thick with Ugandans, who made them pay a toll to continue," while Rwandans were moving in from the south. A Lebanese diamond buyer confirmed this. "No stones," he said. "We've seen almost nothing this week. People don't dare to move on the roads." On his satellite television, "Braveheart," dubbed in Arabic, was being broadcast from Syria, and he pointed past the TV to a series of holes that ran in a ragged diagonal through the curtain that hung over his second-story window—the trail of machine-gun fire from last August's fighting. "Why repair anything when we're just waiting for the next round?" he asked.

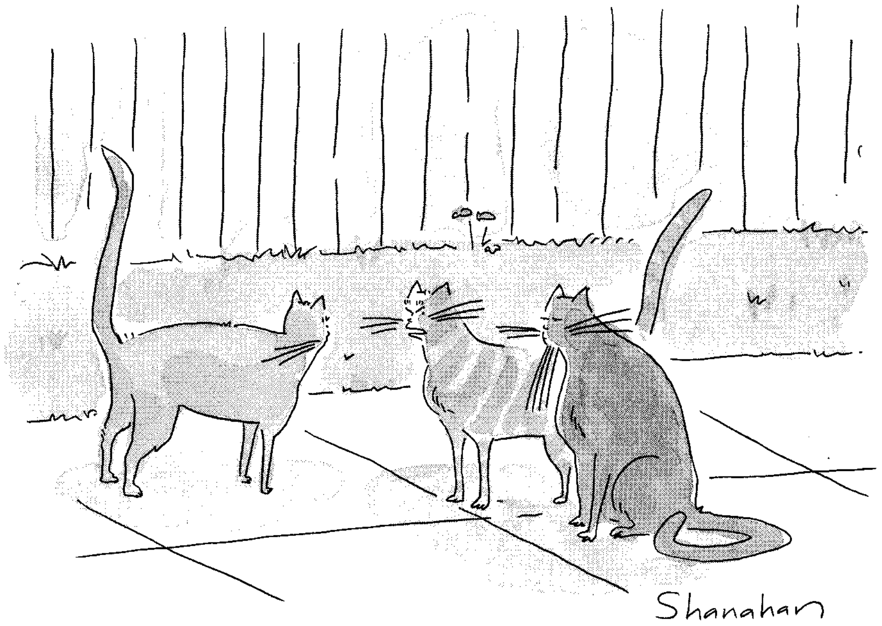
Nobody in Kisangani doubted that a battle was in the offing. The only question was when. "Ask the Ugandans," the Rwandan major told me. But the Ugandans weren't talking. At their bases on the outskirts of the city, I was either turned away at the gate or asked to wait, then turned away. Eventually, I tracked down a Ugandan major, who was eating lunch in town. "Everything is as it seems," he told me, and when I said, "It seems like there will be a fight" he said, "That is an assumption. People assume these stories. But I don't have any details."

After each stop, my driver would say, "So? Tell me," and when I then held my hands up empty he'd say, "They're hiding something." In the repetition of this ritual, I began to understand that the uncanny quiet that hung over Kisangani was the sound of oblivion. "Aye, aye, aye," he said at one point, "we Congolese are nobody's concern," and one morning at the city's top hotel—a clammy riverside pile, called the Palm Beach, where the tap water ran green and the breakfast menu in the vast, empty restaurant was a choice of Coca-Cola or beer—the desk clerk said, "When you return to the world outside, please remember that we here are forgotten."

The provincial Vice-Governor put the problem more practically. "We're cut off," he told me. "The railroad doesn't run, the river's cut by the war, and there are no roads and no phones. The only way in or out is by airplane." And the airplanes operated without a clear schedule. When I wanted to leave, I learned that the trick was to listen for the roar overhead, then race to the airport and find out where the plane was going next. Eventually, the Antonov that had brought me in reappeared. As I waited for one of the Ukrainian pilots to run into town (to buy a pair of endangered forest-elephant tusks), the Rwandan major arrived and told me that an agreement had been reached with the Ugandans.

"We will not fight now," he said, and he was right. The fighting didn't start again until early May, when a nasty one-day battle tore through the city. As flare-ups continued, Rwanda and Uganda agreed to withdraw their forces, to a distance of a hundred kilometres from Kisangani. The withdrawal was to be carried out in four phases, and the first three went without bloodshed. But plenty of men and guns were left behind for the final phase, when, once again, the two armies began fighting, with insane fury. The battle got under way around mid-morning on Monday, June 5th, and by Saturday evening some six thousand artillery rounds had fallen on the city. Hundreds of civilians were killed in the cross-fire, and more than a thousand were wounded. A mortar shell had wiped out the only functioning turbine in the municipal power plant, leaving the city without electricity or running water. At the main hospital, doctors without medical supplies washed their hands in buckets of murky brown river water, and watched their patients die in the dark. Food was running out. Tens of thousands of Kisanganians had fled, on foot or by dugout canoe, into the bush, but some two hundred thousand people, including thousands of lost and disoriented children, remained pinned down in the city center, where they were caught when the fighting began, cowering in hiding places, too terrified to venture out amid the spray of bullets and shrapnel to bury the fly-blown corpses that lay putrefying in the rubble of blasted buildings and the otherwise deserted streets.

Then, on Sunday, it was over. Uganda retreated, Rwanda declared victory, each country blamed the other for firing the first shot, and both said they really would now leave the city they had laid waste, and Kisangani lapsed back into silence.



"As soon as vacation's over, off it comes."

Oh, Congo. What a wreck. It hurts to look and listen, and it hurts to turn away.

When V. S. Naipaul set his novel "A Bend in the River" in Kisangani, he opened it with the sentence "The world is what it is; men who are nothing, who allow themselves to become nothing, have no place in it." But what if a country of nearly fifty million men, women, and children becomes nothing? What is its place in the world?

After the fighting in Kisangani, in June, Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the U.N., demanded that Rwanda and Uganda withdraw "promptly" from Congo, and he threatened to use force against them if they didn't. But the threat was meaningless. What force? This February, half a year after the Lusaka accord called for an aggressive U.N. peacekeeping mission in Congo, the Security Council decided that it would suffice for a team of five hundred military observers, backed by five thousand military and civilian personnel, to be sent in with a mandate that allows them to use force only if attacked. That force is half the size of the misbegotten U.N. mission to Sierra Leone, for a country thirty-three times larger, and for a war with at least five times as many parties.

In recent weeks, Kabila has mounted a series of new offensives, apparently taking encouragement from the disarray of the Rwandan-Ugandan alliance as grounds for imagining that he might win the war on the battlefield. As usual, he is alone in his belief, but his conspicuous absence from the gathering of world leaders at this month's U.N. Millennium Summit in New York insured that no meaningful discussions could be held there about peace in Congo. And so far the U.N. has failed to muster, much less to deploy, more than a tiny fraction of its proposed feeble force.

"The world is not serious," Kagame's adviser Emmanuel Ndahiro said. "The world doesn't care." And on this point, at least, the Rwandans and the Ugandans (who have, for the moment, withdrawn from Kisangani and reaffirmed their alliance) were agreed. "Except for those who are fighting in Congo, nobody is paying attention," Colonel Kahinda Otafire, an adviser to Uganda's President Museveni, told me. "Nobody even tries to understand. The world has abandoned Congo entirely."

But what would it really mean for the "world" to get serious about Congo? A massive invasion? A Marshall Plan? Such international seriousness about a vast tract of African jungle teeming with "negative forces" is nearly inconceivable. Last year, shortly after NATO's jets forced Serbian forces to withdraw from Kosovo, I listened to a triumphant Clinton adviser claim that, for the first time ever, the great Western powers had waged a war that was not about their narrowly defined political, economic, or military interests but simply "about humanity." When I asked him whether Africans, who suffer the abuses of ruthless leaders on a scale that consistently dwarfs even the horrors witnessed in Kosovo, also belonged to the White House's definition of humanity, he thought about it for a moment and said, "It's a good question."

There is no reason to imagine that the next American President will adopt a different attitude toward African conflicts. What's more, it is doubtful that the Africans who feel abandoned in their current struggles would really welcome more vigorous international military attention. Considering the debilitating legacy of outside meddling in the continent's political affairs, why should they have any hope of better treatment in the future? That's not what the world is. And by their presence in Congo the Africans who are mixing it up there show that they know it.

In Kinshasa one day, I wrote the word "Optimists" atop a clean page in my notebook, with the idea of recording the most upbeat remarks people made to me about life in Congo, and what I came up with was this:

> A *métis*—mixed blood, half European/half Rwandan—businessman said, "One good thing the Congolese have learned through their suffering is to live without a functioning government. They can keep on going like this forever."
>
> A Muslim Indian dry-goods trader said, "If you want to cure an atheist of his disbelief, just put him here, and let him see the miracle—that life goes on, in spite of everything."
>
> An American expatriate said, "You have to recognize that the Congolese are people who have not only survived but in many cases actually thrived under conditions of extreme difficulty and hardship. The human resources of this country are simply staggering."
>
> Another American said, "Forget about politics for a minute. If you want to see what the Congolese do right, you've got to see how they party."

I'm sure I heard other encouraging things in Congo, but after a while I forgot about my "Optimists" page, and when I came across it again the other day I was struck by two things: none of the speakers were Congolese, and their remarks were all essentially the same—cheerful tributes to the ingenuity and pluck with which the forsaken folk around them got on with their meagre lives. I couldn't help feeling that these remarks reflected a self-protective urge not to recognize desperation too starkly. What choice do people have but to survive as best they can?

"The Congolese have been so humiliated so many times. It's terrible to think about," one of Kagame's deputies said to me with an odd mixture of sympathy and disdain. "So much humiliation. It's like they expect it and know nothing else." Uganda's Colonel Otafire put the

CROWS

In Japan, in Seattle, in Indonesia—there they were—
each one loud and hungry,
crossing a field, or sitting
above the traffic, or dropping

to the lawn of some temple to sun itself
or walk about on strong legs,
like a landlord. I think
they don't envy anyone or anything—

not the tiger, not the emperor,
not even the philosopher.
Why should they?
The wind is their friend, the least tree is home.

Nor is melody, they have discovered, necessary.
Nor have they delicate palates;
without hesitation they will eat
anything you can think of—

corn, mice, old hamburgers—
swallowing with such hollering and gusto

no one can tell whether it's a brag
or a prayer of deepest thanks. At sunrise, when I walk out,

I see them in trees, or on ledges of buildings,
as cheerful as saints, or thieves of the small job
who have been, one more night, successful—
and like all successes, it turns my thoughts to myself.

Should I have led a more simple life?
Have my ambitions been worthy?
Has the wind, for years, been talking to me as well?
Somewhere, among all my thoughts, there is a narrow path.

It's attractive, but who could follow it?
Slowly the full morning
draws over us its mysterious and lovely equation.
Then, in the branches poling from their dark center,

ever more flexible and bright,
sparks from the sun are bursting and melting on the birds' wings,
as, indifferent and comfortable,
they lounge, they squabble in the vast, rose-colored light.

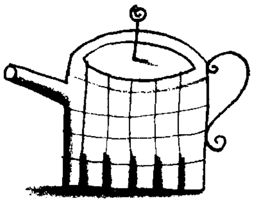
—*Mary Oliver*

problem a bit more gently: "If someone has never had a refrigerator, he doesn't know that a refrigerator exists, and he doesn't know that a refrigerator is useful, and so he can't miss it. The Congolese people have never had a good government, so it doesn't occur to them to fight for one."

But the great majority of the Congolese I met with, in all walks of life, did not want to fight. They spoke of politics and the war in the way that the myths of antiquity describe how the feuding of the Greek gods buffeted and battered great swaths of humanity—as something awfully like destiny. Time and again, the Congolese told me, as a point of pride, that they were a people of great patience. All they wanted, they said, was to be left alone to get on with their lives.

One night in Kinshasa, the American optimist who told me that I should see how the Congolese party took me to meet some friends of his in La Cité, a district famous for its night life, and as the source of much of the best of Congo's irresistibly danceable music. Mobbed streets were lined with open-air bars, each blasting its own ferociously juking melodies, and we settled in at one to a feast of beer and superbly grilled goat meat, sitting around a table that commanded a fine view of the passing parade: a ceaseless stream of elegant men and women, ambling through the dusty haze, with ragged street children darting playfully among them, and peddlers hawking everything from peanuts and cigarettes to plastic handbags and nylon-lace napkins.

As the music got louder, and the other drinkers around us rose from their chairs into a dancing throng, a clown suddenly appeared at the curb in front of us. He was a gaunt, white-haired man, wearing a silly little porkpie hat, enormous plastic spectacles, a bright-orange shirt, baggy pants cinched high over his hips by a belt with a huge silver buckle, and overlarge shoes that made his bony ankles look almost too thin to support him. At first, he just stood there, looking shabby and sorrowful. Then, when he sensed that his peculiarity was being noticed by a few of us around the tables of the bar, he began to shuffle his feet to the music, then to gyrate his hips wildly. As he danced, his audience grew, because despite his ludicrous getup and deliberately gawky movements it was clear that he was a man of extraordinary physical and comic grace, and that he had come to entertain us. He ducked, and he spun, and he kicked up his heels, and he took off in high leaps, touching down with a fluttering ease to spin and wriggle some more. Then he stopped, unzipped his fly, and, reaching through it deep into his trouser leg, extracted a necktie, and made a great show of cleaning his giant spectacles with it, before tucking and zipping it tightly away again.



The crowd loved the clown. People clustered around him, dancing, with their hands raised high above their heads, as if they were bearing witness in a charismatic gospel church. He never said a word, but his pantomime was eloquent, and when he approached a table, and helped himself, with a little bow and a nod, to a man's bottle of beer and his lighted cigarette, others eagerly thrust their beers and cigarettes at him. But the clown wasn't interested. Even when a fight broke out in the street behind him, he paid no attention. He was dancing again—now with the beer bottle balanced on his head—whirling and undulating, and playing with his cigarette, smoking it from one nostril, then the other, even tucking it into his ear for a while. Finally, turning away from us and hiking his pants up, he clenched the cigarette between his scrawny buttocks and flexed them in such a way that he appeared to be blowing smoke out of his ass.

"Fantastic," one of the Congolese at my table said. "This man is the true spirit of this place." He got out a wad of Congolese francs, and when, at last, the clown stopped dancing and came over to collect the money, I, too, reached for my pocket. But the clown held out his hands to stop me. He bowed and smiled wanly, still without a word, and then suddenly he spoke. His voice was high and nasal, his words came quickly, and for a puzzled moment I imagined he was speaking Italian. But it was French, and what he said was "When you go back where you come from, will you take me in your suitcase?" ♦

PROFILES

COMMON MAN

The most watched man on television wonders why.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

America loves Regis Philbin, and Regis, I like to think, likes me. He has, at any rate, taken me with him to his gym on Columbus Avenue, across from the WABC studios, to work out. He is wearing a gray *Men's Health* T-shirt, black nylon shorts, and very white Nike sneakers. He has little flecks of pancake makeup stuck to his nose. At one of the many low moments in his career, in the early nineteen-eighties, Philbin had a fitness show on cable, "Regis Philbin's Health Styles," and now, at sixty-seven, he is still in dauntingly good shape. The first time we met, he stripped off his shirt in the dressing room of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," flexed in the style of Charles Atlas, and said, "You'll never see this from your English-professor husband!"

Philbin's gym routine is to concentrate on a single muscle group, working it with three different exercises, each repeated three times. Today, he is doing shoulders. He has just used an elaborate contraption with ropes and pulleys to lift a hundred and ten pounds. He resets it for me at twenty. Philbin has made a career of anatomizing human frailty without ever drawing blood, and the possibility that I might be not just a weakling but sensitive about it seems to leave him at a loss. "I thought you said you worked out," he says at one point, almost plaintively. Eventually, for lack of an alternative, he settles for a half-hearted joke about my physiognomy. "Betsy has an expressive face," he says to some imagined audience while I, grimacing, grapple with another machine.

As the new fall season gets under way, Philbin is, almost by an order of magnitude, the most watched man on television. ABC, in effect, no longer has a prime-time lineup; it just has "Millionaire," which it will run four evenings a week starting next month. Bill Carter, of the *Times*, has called the program "the most significant development in American television in ten years," which is actually a relatively modest claim compared with those of others, who have called it the most significant development in the history of the medium. Virtually every time it airs, "Millionaire" is the top-rated show for the night, and its popularity has, all on its own, lifted the ABC network from third place to first, boosted the stock value of its parent company, Disney, and inspired a wholesale rethinking of what makes a prime-time hit.

Meanwhile, a Philbin-based industry of "Millionaire" tie-ins and spinoffs has grown up on the side. There is Philbin's line of "Millionaire"-style shirts and ties to be promoted, a series of "Millionaire" computer games to be dubbed, a "Millionaire" musical CD to be plugged, and Philbin's most recent autobiography, "Who Wants to Be Me?," to be flogged. Everyone wants to get a piece of Regis, and when I first approached his publicity people, back in June, about getting mine they said he was too busy. Later, he relented, but not without first warning me, via voice mail, "You can't do this. You can't follow me around. You don't have this kind of stamina!" On the day we exercised together, I calculated that in the course of fulfilling all his obligations Philbin had had to get in and out of his clothes seven times.

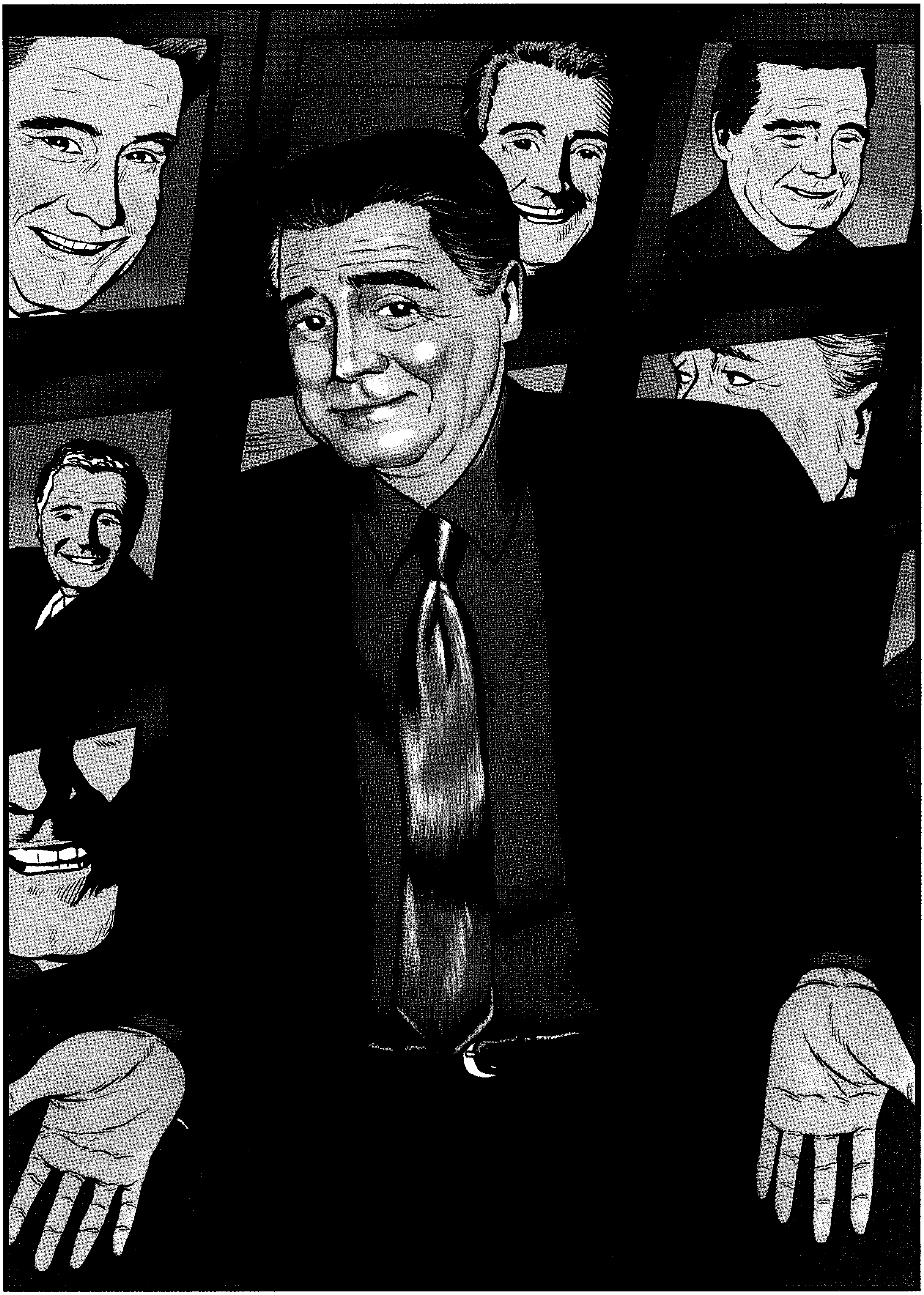
As an index of individual talent, success on this scale almost never makes sense. Still, "Millionaire" is a special case. By Philbin's own account, he ended up hosting the show only because of his wife, who wanted him out of the house in the afternoon. He decided to look for a game show to fill his time, since, as he put it to me, "those are easy—usually you can do them five in one day." The executives at ABC, for their part, never thought of Philbin as a potential host until he suggested himself for the job, and even then they first offered it to several other people, who turned it down, presumably because the whole idea of a prime-time game show struck them as juvenile, or far-fetched, or both.

A week or two before I went with Philbin to the gym, I accompanied him to a taping for a new sports edition of the "Millionaire" CD-ROM game. He had just finished his morning talk show, formerly "Live! With Regis & Kathie Lee," and now, since the departure of his co-host, Kathie Lee Gifford, just "Live with Regis," which has run five days a week for the last fifteen years. We took a chauffeured car down from the "Live" studio, on West Sixty-seventh Street, and when we arrived at the recording studio, which is on West Forty-second, we were on the wrong side of the street. The driver offered to make a U-turn to deliver us to the door. Philbin declined. "You sure?" the driver asked. "Yeah, sure," Philbin replied, though he should have known better. "Is that your final answer?" the driver asked. Philbin shot me a look of infinite suffering.

Inside the recording studio, half a dozen people were waiting. Philbin introduced me to them as a reporter who was doing a "very important piece" on him, an "exhaustive" piece, a piece that would be "a test" to read all the way to the end. We were ushered into a small soundproof room. Philbin sat on a stool in front of a large microphone. It soon became clear that the microphone wasn't working. No one seemed to be able to identify exactly what the problem was. "You understand?" Philbin told one of the technicians. "Eighty-five pages in *The New Yorker*. This is at least five pages."

After several minutes of bustle but no progress, Philbin asked his assistant to summon the managing director of the studio, Stephen Pinkus, who was apparently an old friend of his. Pinkus

MARK ZINGARELLI



The difference between Regis Philbin on camera and off camera is, one quickly discovers, mostly just the camera.

"So have you two been doing anything reproductive?"

arrived almost immediately to inquire into the problem.

PHILBIN: The problem is I don't know what the hell the problem is. Pinkus, listen to me. *The New Yorker* magazine is doing an in-depth study.

PINKUS: Well, whatever he doesn't like we'll rip out. Get me construction!

PHILBIN: He's going to do a little show biz now. Pinkus, she's writing. She's writing things down. Let's go.

PINKUS: Ooh, ooh, I'm sweating!

PHILBIN: Steve Pinkus is a good name to slip in there. A lot of laughs, but no action.

PINKUS: What is the problem, so I can make it happen for you?

PHILBIN: We can't get audio.

PINKUS: Oh, well, you want audio also?

PHILBIN: He's very funny, Pinkus.

PINKUS: I must tell you something. Every time I walk in this building, they say, "You look just like Regis." And I say, "I taught Regis how to dress!"

The difference between watching Philbin on camera and off camera is, one quickly discovers, mostly just the camera. "Live with Regis" is unscripted and, to a large extent, also unplanned. Philbin doesn't believe in writers, and so no one, including his co-host, really knows what he's going to say during the twenty-minute stretch between the opening credits and the first commercial break. His shtick turns on the familiar devices of aggravation, insult, and bad luck—Why didn't Brad and Jennifer invite him to the wedding? "I should have been there!"—again and again.

As soon as the problem with the microphone was sorted out and Philbin got down to work, things proceeded swiftly. The producers had allocated twelve hours over three days for the taping, but Philbin read his lines, mostly a series of cheesy sports metaphors—"You're confident Answer B is a TKO," or "You're sure that Answer D won't drop you in a sand trap"—with so few glitches that he was finished in half that time.

At around one o'clock, the group broke for lunch. A lavish spread had been laid out just outside the sound studio. Philbin looked at the trays, heaped, in his honor, with baby vegetables, steak wraps, grilled chicken, and sautéed salmon, and started in again. He had, he told me, asked for a simple tuna-fish sandwich, and the sandwich, in its absence, became a preoccupation. "All I ever wanted was a tuna-fish sandwich. . . . Write this down. In New York City, you can't get a tuna-fish sandwich. . . . They want to give me sautéed chicken and salmon, and I don't want that. . . . Regis wanted to get a tuna-fish sandwich, but it's impossible in New York, delis being what they are." Eventually, someone went out to buy him the sandwich. It came wrapped in a piece of white paper, and Philbin ate it. Then he poured himself a cup of coffee, which was lukewarm. "That's O.K.," he said. "Regis doesn't deserve hot coffee."

Television, as a rule, humiliates the old, and there's no obvious reason that Philbin should be an exception. He may have a whole line of CD-ROM games, but he can't play them. "I'm computer-free, thank you," he once told me. The people he admires most—Dean Martin, Jack Paar, Perry Como—I could never remember if they were alive or dead.

Philbin got his first job in television, moving props at KCOP, in Hollywood, in 1955, the same year that "The $64,000 Question" premièred. TV was little more than a decade old, and almost everything on it, including the commercials, was broadcast live. Philbin recalls one particular ad, for a furniture store, which required schlepping entire roomfuls of dinettes back and forth from the prop house every time it aired.

Philbin grew up in the Bronx—his

father was a personnel manager, his mother was a housewife—and appears to have enjoyed a classic, nineteen-forties stickball-and-soda-fountain sort of youth. He has no real explanation for his decision to work in television. "Why?" he once said when I pressed him on the subject. "I thought it would be fun. I don't know why." At Cardinal Hayes High School, and then at the University of Notre Dame, he had nothing to do with dramatics, or with performance of any kind. "I used to sit there in the auditorium and watch the band and watch the variety shows and the school productions," he told me. "I had no guts, no confidence. It was terrible." In this spirit, he dedicated his first autobiography, "I'm Only One Man!" (1995), to "any of you who have ever wanted to do something but feared you might not be good enough to do it."

For all his reported lack of confidence, Philbin rose quickly in L.A., from stagehand to writer to local newscaster. By the time he was twenty-eight, he had his own talk show, which aired Saturday nights at eleven-fifteen in San Diego, and when he was thirty-one Westinghouse tapped him to be the host of a nationally syndicated program. Entitled "That Regis Philbin Show!," the program was designed to compete against Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show." *Variety*, in a review of the show's première, called it "so low key it must have lulled a good portion of the audience to sleep." It was cancelled after just four months.

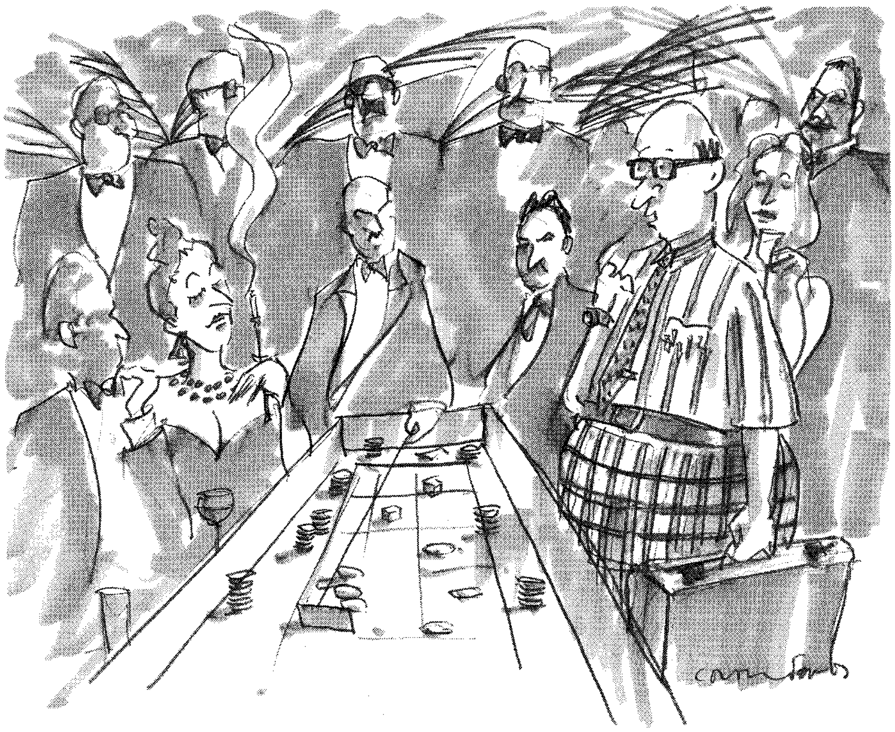
For the next twenty-five years, Philbin struggled, mostly unsuccessfully, to regain his early prominence. He went back to newscasting, hosted a series of local morning shows, and tried another nationally syndicated program; this one failed after five months. Tom Battista, who had been Philbin's director back in San Diego, had become the general manager of a station in St. Louis, and for three and a half years Philbin, commuting from L.A., did a once-a-week late-night show there. "All of us have to eat," Battista, who is still a close friend of Philbin's, told me. "And in this business it's sometimes tough to get a meal."

Recently, I went to look at a cache of old Philbin tapes that have been stored in boxes at ABC. A lot of his career was missing, either because no one had bothered to preserve the tapes or because no one had bothered to make them in the first place. I saw a very young Philbin milking a goat and getting attacked by a karate expert, and an older, grayer Philbin wrangling with baby lions in a cage, practicing pliés in a leotard and tights, and laughing uproariously while one of his co-hosts threw up. ("Put the camera on that man and shoot him! This is live television!") There was Philbin learning how to remove spots from stuffed animals with cornmeal, how to make dog biscuits at home, how to fight snoring, and how to do "sexergenics"; Philbin interviewing Dick Clark and Raquel Welch and Johnny Carson ("I don't know what my life would be without you at night to look forward to," he tells Carson, who responds, "Things aren't going that well, huh?"); and Philbin complaining—about his commute to the station, his inept bosses, his wife's eating habits, his reviews.

The conspicuous gap in the tapes was "The Joey Bishop Show," on which Philbin served as the abject sidekick. The show was yet another ill-fated attempt to go head to head with Carson, and lasted from 1967 to 1969. Whatever tapes still exist, Bishop has them and isn't sharing. I called him one day to ask about his recollections of Philbin, and the first thing he wanted to know was how he could be sure I was really a reporter. When he'd been more or less appeased on that topic, I asked whether he thought Philbin had changed, or grown, since his sidekick days. Bishop responded, "What are you looking for? Dirt?" He did, however, share with me, unsolicited, his thoughts about "Millionaire," which were that the prize money started too low. "I'm not rooting for some guy to win a hundred dollars," he said.

This summer, just before Kathie Lee Gifford left the morning show, she and Philbin performed a sold-out farewell concert at Westbury Music Fair, on Long Island. Gifford has a big, Broadway voice and a taste for songs about heartache, and "ordinary miracles," and change that "comes in on tiptoes." Philbin's voice—he himself is not sure whether it is a baritone or a tenor—probably wouldn't stand out at a neighborhood sing-along.

When the rehearsal for the show was finished, at about five-thirty, Philbin headed out to meet a publicity agent named Danny Frank for dinner at a local steak house. Philbin frequently complains that he has no en-



"The name's Bond. Duane Bond."

tourage, but he obviously isn't interested in one, and he befriends, it seems, pretty much anyone who wants—or needs—his attention badly enough. One morning, I saw an elderly man greet Philbin at the door of his apartment building and then walk the hundred yards over to the studio with him. Later, I asked who that was, and Philbin told me it was just someone who seemed to like walking him to work and talking about sports. Similarly, Philbin told me that his friendship with Danny Frank dated back to a day in 1983 when Frank had spent several hours outside the studio waiting for him in the snow.

Frank, who used to book Henny Youngman into malls, has jowls and a fringe of gray hair and wears a diamond pinkie ring on each hand. During dinner, he and the steak house's owner, Gillis Poll, did most of the talking, a lot of it centering on trying to get Philbin to appear at a new restaurant that Poll's brother is opening in Central Park. Philbin just rolled his eyes, and cracked an occasional joke at Frank's expense. At one point, Poll's mother, Alexandra, a large woman in tinted glasses and a billowing white outfit, came in and sat down at the table.

"We had Vice-President Quayle and Pete Sampras here, and I have never come in, and this is the honest truth," she announced. "You are very loved. You really are very, very loved. I mean not only from me, but people love you. They really do. You are clever, clever with some of these contestants, and you make faces, and I am hysterical. You're not boring. You've got talent." Mrs. Poll then presented Philbin with a pocket-size holy picture in sterling silver, which, she said, she had brought back from Italy. Philbin thanked her: "It's the Virgin and—the baby Danny Frank!"

Until "Millionaire," Philbin's audience consisted mainly of women of a certain age—or older—and these are still, far and away, his most devoted fans. At the concert hall, there were easily four females for every male, and not a small number of them had trouble walking to their seats. Before the show, I spoke to some of these women about what had brought them to the concert and, more generally, their feelings about Regis and Kathie Lee. Most seemed well versed in the ups and downs of Philbin's life. (These include a first marriage, to the actress Kay Faylen, which produced a daughter, Amy, and a son, Danny, who was born without muscles in his legs and is confined to a wheelchair.) None made the slightest distinction between Philbin and his television persona. "He gets lost going to a restaurant," one woman, a piano teacher from Nesconset, told me. "He's totally down-to-earth, totally vulnerable. He didn't forget the mistakes he made in his life." About Gifford, sentiment seemed much more divided. One woman called her "a little too much"; another pronounced her "phony." Gifford has said that she left "Live" to pursue other opportunities, but some proffered the theory that she was really going because she couldn't deal with Philbin's "Millionaire" stardom.

My seat for the concert was in the front row and, as it happened, next to several members of Gifford's entourage. At one point, when she was working the aisles, vamping for a man who told her he had been married forty-eight years, Gifford noticed me taking notes. She asked what I was doing, and when I told her I was a reporter she snatched up my notebook and started reading aloud from it to the crowd. Just moments earlier, I had scribbled that her dress made her look like Bamm Bamm, but all she could discern from my handwriting was a transcription of her own words: "Let the next bimbo who works with him do that!" My presence became a running joke of her routine, and several times she turned to me, following one of her remarks, to shriek, "Write that down! That's funny!"

Gifford and Philbin have a standard act that they have refined over the years, the highlight of which is a classic put-down-the-audience stunt that ought to, but somehow doesn't, offend. Philbin invites onstage several hefty women, chats them up, and then serenades them with "Calendar Girl." This time, a woman who was determined to be included rushed the stage, flinging at Philbin a pair of red silk panties. "Thank you very much; that's a thrill," Philbin said while pantomiming terror. In honor of Gifford's departure, Philbin closed with a comic version of "Thanks for the Memories," and she called him "the bravest man" on television. "You can tell this man never had a writer," she declared, intending this, one had to assume, as a compliment.

After the show, there was a private party for the stars and the orchestra in a tent out in the parking lot. Since Philbin was with his wife, Joy, and involved in farewell toasts, I decided not to bother him on my way out. (The next day, I received a message on my voice mail: "Spend a whole day with you. Sing my guts out onstage for you. Do everything I can for you, and not even a goodbye.") As I was leaving, I went past a barricade behind which thirty or forty fans were waiting. Suddenly I found myself recognized as "the reporter," and, for no very good reason, the center of attention. One woman insisted on telling me a long, rambling, and completely unconvincing story about a date she had had with Regis in the early nineteen-fifties, when she was a teenager, and another wanted to tell me an even weirder and more irrelevant story, about her cousin's night out on the town with him. I found the whole experience disquieting; it gave me a faint inkling of what Philbin has to put up with all the time.

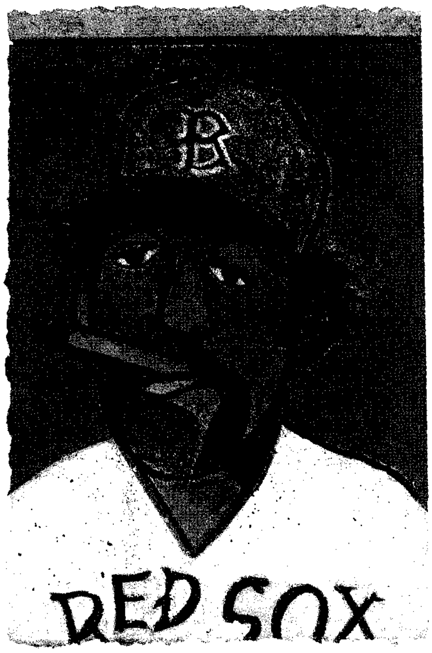
Just about the only claim Philbin makes with any passion for his forty-five years in television is on behalf of "host chat," the unscripted opening that he has used in a succession of talk shows, starting with his very first one in San Diego. Philbin claims to have got the idea for host chat from his idol, Jack Paar, in what amounts to a Gracie Allen-meets-Harold Bloom version of artistic influence. "Paar would come out, lean against his desk, and tell you what he saw," Philbin told me. It was only years later that he discovered that Paar's graceful, witty, off-the-cuff observations had, in fact, been composed for him by a staff of writers.

The subject matter for host chat is drawn partly from the morning's headlines but mostly from the flotsam and jetsam of Philbin's own experience, much of which, of course, consists of the making of the show. Philbin's on-air relationship with Gifford is, or at least was, central. When she joined the show, in 1985, Kathie Lee Johnson was a single woman whose career highlights included a stint on a TV comedy called "Hee Haw Honeys." She subsequently married Frank Gifford and went through two on-the-air pregnancies. Her stories about her children and her husband and her many home-improvement projects, while often hard to take, always gave Philbin something to work with. Both Michael Gelman, the executive producer of "Live," and Art Moore, WABC's director of programming, gradually became part of the routine as well; Gelman once bought himself a BMW and has never heard the end of it.

Lately, Philbin's own success has further narrowed his scope. He and Joy, who was Joey Bishop's assistant, live near his gym, on West Sixty-seventh Street. (They have been married for thirty years, and have two daughters, Jennifer and Joanna, who are both grown and out of the house.) The apartment is just across the street from WABC, where "Live" is shot in the morning, and down the block from the studio where "Millionaire" is taped, in the afternoon. During the week, Philbin spends most of his time inside this tiny triangle, and on the weekends he and Joy go to a house they own in Greenwich, where he likes to play tennis and watch sports on TV. Recently, Philbin was so strapped for material that a long stretch of host chat was given over to one of those annoying people whose legs are always blocking the aisle at the movies just when you need to go to the bathroom. (He needed to go twice.)

Philbin once told me that he thought host chat was "underappreciated," a valid claim, perhaps, but one that I was still a bit surprised to hear him make. To do live television of this nature requires a number of talents—among them flexibility, quickness, and an ear for the unexpected—but self-regard is not one of them. One day, after I had sat in the studio audience for "Live," I asked Philbin whether he thought that particular morning's program had gone well. "I don't even think about it anymore," he told me. "I never evaluate it afterward. It is what it is." The premise behind host chat, to the extent that there is one, would appear to be that people don't actually expect very much from TV. The worst that one could say about Philbin is that he has exploited

TAKES



RICHARD MERKIN

Luis Tiant's repertoire begins with an exaggerated mid-windup pivot, during which he turns his back on the batter and seems to examine the infield directly behind the mound for signs of crabgrass. With men on bases, his stretch consists of a succession of minute downward waggles and pauses of the glove, and a menacing sidewise, slit-eyed, Valentino-like gaze over his shoulder at the base runner. The full flower of his art, however, comes during the actual delivery, which is executed with a perfect variety show of accompanying gestures and impersonations. I had begun to take notes during my recent observations of the Cuban Garrick, and now, as he set down the Reds with only minimal interruptions (including one balk call, in the fourth), I arrived at some tentative codifications. The basic Tiant repertoire seems to include:

(1) Call the Osteopath: In mid-pitch, the man suffers an agonizing seizure in the central cervical region, which he attempts to fight off with a sharp backward twist of the head.

(2) Out of the Woodshed: Just before releasing the ball, he steps over a raised sill and simultaneously ducks his head to avoid conking it on the low doorframe.

(3) The Runaway Taxi: Before the pivot, he sees a vehicle bearing down on him at top speed, and pulls back his entire upper body just in time to avoid a nasty accident.

(4) Falling Off the Fence: An attack of vertigo nearly causes him to topple over backward on the mound. Strongly suggests a careless dude on the top rung of the corral.

(5) The Slipper-Kick: In mid-pitch, he surprisingly decides to get rid of his left shoe.

(6) The Low-Flying Plane (a subtle development and amalgam of 1, 3, and 4, above): While he is pivoting, an F-105 buzzes the ballpark, passing over the infield from the third-base to the first-base side at a height of eighty feet. He follows it all the way with his eyes.

—*Roger Angell*
The Sporting Scene, November 17, 1975

this sad fact about the medium, and the best that he has recognized it for the wonderful opportunity it represents.

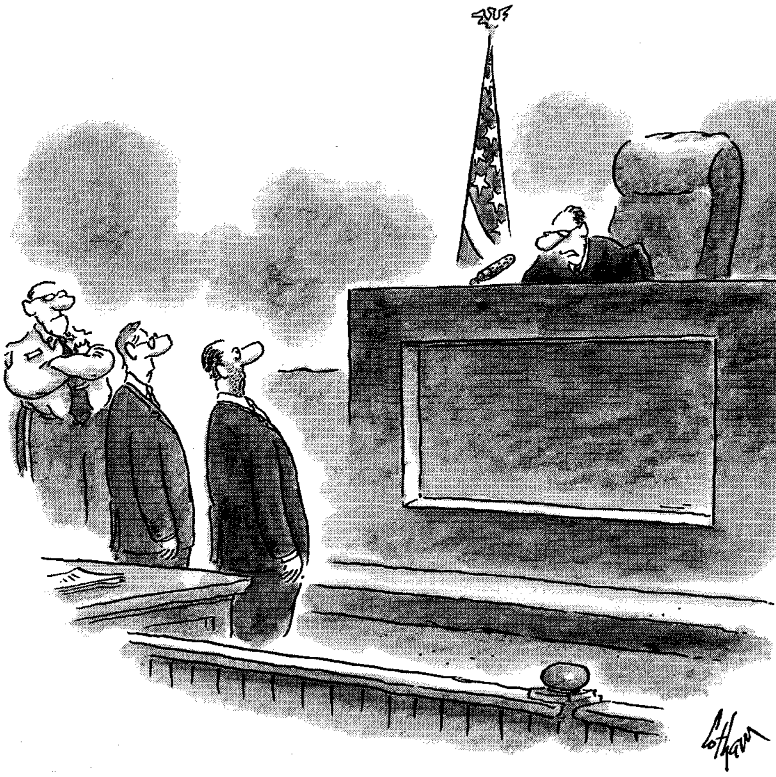
Not long ago, on "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," Philbin put a question to a bouncer from L.A. named Rich Rosner:

> What capital city is located at the highest altitude above sea level?
> A. Mexico City
> B. Quito
> C. Bogotá
> D. Kathmandu

Rosner had been a contestant on the first installment of "Millionaire," back in August of 1999, without ever reaching the "hot seat," and now he had got as far as the eight-thousand-dollar mark. He sat there sweating, talking to himself, rehearsing his reasoning, and eventually decided to use one of his "lifelines" to call his writer friend Michael. Michael was ninety-per-cent positive that the city was Kathmandu, but even after hearing this Rosner still couldn't make up his mind. He debated using another lifeline, pondered some more, and pronounced himself torn between Kathmandu and Mexico City. "It's really something, isn't it?" Philbin said. "You waited a year to get back here, and now you're here, and now we're waiting a year for your answer."

"Millionaire" has no time limits. Instead, it allows its contestants to stew over their responses indefinitely. This summer, one contestant, hoping to become the first woman to win the top prize, took forty minutes to answer the five-hundred-thousand-dollar question. (She answered wrong.) The very next week, a man surpassed her time by taking fifty-two minutes to wrestle with a two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar question. (He also answered wrong.) The "Millionaire" editors distill these tedious waits down to agonizing pauses, which they fill with the show's maddening telltale-heart sound effects and shots of the stricken contestants and their spouses. On TV, Rosner's ordeal lasted five minutes before he finally followed Michael's advice, only to learn that the correct answer was Quito.

All game shows are inherently sadistic. "Millionaire" is, in this respect, entirely typical—a familiar, even atavistic reprise of the original fifties formula. Yet still it manages to push the conceits to new heights of hamdom. Everything about it is overproduced and over the top, from the melodramatic pauses, throbbing sound effects, strobe lights, and hyperbolic prize money to the pan shots, fog machines, and campily futuristic set. To sit in the audience, with the lights underneath the Plexiglas floor swivelling in all directions and a huge camera boom sweeping overhead, is to feel as if one were inside a giant pinball machine.



"Yes, it will be a clean needle."

Philbin says he recognized the potential of "Millionaire" immediately. In the spring of 1999, his agent sent him a tape of the British version of the show and, he told me, "As soon as I saw it, I said, 'Yeah, this is the one.' " He called executives at ABC who were considering importing the program to this country and made his pitch to be the host. "They weren't thinking of me," he said. "I wasn't on any list." (According to Philbin, people on the list included Phil Donahue and Montel Williams, neither of whom wanted the job.) He kept on pushing. His current contract with the network is reportedly worth twenty million dollars.

Philbin does not, in fact, represent a logical choice for the program's host. First of all, the job requires him to read most of his lines, something that he's never been terribly good at. (He still blames the failure of his Westinghouse show on the fact that he had to deliver jokes that had been written for him in advance.) Second, the show is in the wrong spirit for him. ABC licenses "Millionaire" from its British creators, who provide a set of specifications that run to a hundred and sixty-eight pages, and who insist on strict adherence to them whether the show is being produced in Italy or India. This is both the sort of rigidity that Philbin usually resists and the sort of self-seriousness he usually makes fun of.

The host of the British "Millionaire" is a large, voluble, ruddy man named Chris Tarrant. Tarrant clearly sees his role as compounding, whenever possible, the Sturm und Drang. "Are you positive?" he will ask, in a tone of voice that suggests you ought not to be. "Absolutely confident? Final, final answer?" Tarrant often treats a right answer as if it were wrong. "You had eight thousand pounds," he will say mournfully. Then, after a long pause: "You've now got sixteen thousand pounds!"

Philbin also teases his guests. In a moment that has become a "Millionaire" classic, Tom Colletta, who worked his way up to the eight-thousand-dollar question with Philbin stringing him along in the Tarrant manner, protested, "I'm a fat man, Regis, my heart can't take it." Philbin shot back, "I'm just trying to help you sweat off a few pounds." But Philbin is too benign to play torturer with the requisite gusto, and he generally seems more intent on diffusing anxiety than on generating it. When contestants lose, even when they have done something incredibly stupid—especially when they have done something incredibly stupid—Philbin appears to feel genuinely sorry for them.

Michael Davies, the executive producer of the American "Millionaire," is himself British. He told me that at first he tried to encourage Philbin to behave more like Tarrant. Now he is reconciled to, and even grateful for, Philbin's resistance. Part of "Millionaire" 's appeal, he speculated to me, is its host's out-of-placeness. "Regis manages to both distance himself from it and be the star of it at the same time," he said.

"Oh, no! Golf-ball-size hail!"

At WABC, Philbin occupies a large, windowless room that he uses both as an office and as a kind of warehouse. On the walls are old photographs, long-forgotten awards, and aging posters, including a blowup of the cover of Philbin's one and only LP, "It's Time for Regis!," which was released in 1968. Books and pictures and souvenirs, many of which have never been unwrapped, cover every other available surface, including parts of the floor. If there is a theme to all this, it is not show business but Notre Dame football; there are Fighting Irish mugs and a Fighting Irish clock and an old beat-up leather helmet and a large photograph of the football stadium, and, in the place of honor, an elaborately framed letter signed by Knute Rockne.

Philbin prepares for "Live" each day amidst this clutter, with his CD player and his TV going at once. On the first, he plays and replays Dean Martin; on the second, he follows his investments on CNBC, mainly, it seems, in order to complain about them. "I only hear how much money he's lost in the market," Tom Battista told me. "He doesn't talk about the wins."

Philbin has obviously been more than comfortable for quite a while now. Five years ago, when he and Joy moved to the West Side, they bought two adjoining condominiums and broke down the walls between them. The resulting apartment has a white grand piano, wraparound views of Manhattan, and several large marble bathrooms. Before that, they lived on Park Avenue.

On morning television, Philbin never really bothered to adapt the logic of his routine to this success. Kathie Lee was the one entranced by becoming a big star; Regis was the one always waiting for the show to be cancelled. "He's still the same insecure kid from the Bronx" was how Gifford liked to put it. By now, though, Philbin's shtick has stretched a little thin. At the farewell concert, for instance, he launched into a familiar lament about his daughter's extravagant European travels. "You can afford it, Reege," one fan yelled out, to much appreciative laughter. Nothing about "Millionaire," it seems safe to say, is underappreciated.

Not long ago, I went to talk to Philbin in his office for what I promised him would be the last interview. When I got there, Dino was singing about "*amore*" and tech stocks were tanking. As always, Philbin was in a tremendous hurry. He had just finished "Live," with Dolly Parton as that morning's co-host—ratings for the show, which has had a succession of guest co-hosts, have gone way up since Gifford left—and he was about to head down to Chelsea Piers to do a publicity photo shoot for ABC.

Philbin greeted me with an exaggerated, "here we go again" kind of look. He sat down at his desk, underneath a half-inflated Notre Dame football balloon, and I sat on a chair facing him, next to a doll wearing a Yankees uniform. We talked a little bit about his summer vacation—he had been in California and out in the Hamptons—and about the upcoming television season. Eventually, I asked him whether "Millionaire" fulfilled the dream he had had all those years ago, when he first started out in Los Angeles. I almost hoped he would make me pay for posing such a sentimental question, but, as I should perhaps have anticipated, he tried, instead, to help me out.

"Now that I think about it, you know, I had a sixth sense about television," he told me. "It was available for more or less the common man to be a part of. You didn't have to be a great singer, or a great dancer, or a great actor. You could make it on television without those talents, if you were able to reveal your humanness. And that's the way it happened. I watch myself on TV, and, I must tell you the truth, I say to myself, 'Why me? What's the big deal?' Thank God I'm on the morning show live, so I never see it. But once in a while, if I'm on tape, on a holiday or something, and I see it, I say, 'Oh my God.' I really mean that. I don't get it. I don't even like talking about it, because I'm afraid someone's going to say, 'Yeah! Why him?' " ♦

FICTION

THYROID DIARY

BY LYDIA DAVIS

Tonight we are going to a party in honor of my dentist's wife, who has just graduated from college. All these years, while my dentist has been working on my teeth, his wife has been earning credits, a few at a time. Every semester, she has taken a tutorial with my husband, who teaches painting and drawing. She is an enthusiastic gardener and likes to paint the flowers she grows. She has written texts about her gardens, to go with her paintings. My husband told me that one of her flower paintings, which was hanging in the Art Building, was stolen at commencement time—by a student, he thought, or by one of the students' parents.

I hadn't realized that my dentist's wife was actually earning a degree until we received the invitation to this party, to be given by her friend, who is a faculty secretary at the college. A few days after the invitation arrived, we received another one from the same woman, for a different date, and I was sure that there had been a mistake. But in fact she is simply giving two parties, two weeks apart, and we are invited to both.

Now I have to wonder why my serious and extensive dental work ended—which it did—just a couple of months before the dentist's wife's graduation. When the dentist told me that I didn't need any further work, I thought I still had two more crowns to go. I can't remember a time when I haven't had more work to be done on my teeth.

The economics of the thing was always a puzzle, anyway: I paid the dentist, and he presumably gave his wife the money for her courses at the college; she paid the college; the college paid my husband for her tutorials, and then my husband gave me the money for the dentist; I paid the dentist; the dentist gave money to his wife; and so it continued. It seemed to me that if no one paid anyone, it would work out just the same, but that didn't seem quite right, either.

This spring, the dentist, who is a gardener like his wife, but grows vegetables and grapes, and has a small apple orchard, made the transactions a little more complicated by proposing to my husband that they share a few shipments of bedding plants, which can be bought more economically in large quantities. He suggested that they share two varieties of tomatoes, as well as some onions and peppers. My husband thought it over and then agreed. In general, he is wary of this kind of obligation, but he is also interested in saving money, and in this case he appreciated the gesture of goodwill.

The party we are going to tonight will be in a small town on the other side of the Hudson. But as soon as I say that, I realize I have made a mistake. This party is not the one in honor of the dentist's wife. This one is for the faculty secretary's nephew, who is going off on a long sea voyage. After many years of living sometimes on land and sometimes on the water, the nephew has sold his house and will be living on his sailboat, though he still has a girlfriend here on land. I should have remembered this, because my husband and I were just discussing at lunch what to give him as a going-away present. We were considering three choices: a copy of Richard Henry Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast," or a book that my husband saw about tying knots, or a bottle of wine. My husband also suggested a bottle of good brandy, but I thought that that would only encourage our friend to drink alone on his boat.

If I'm confused about all this, it may be because of my underactive thyroid. Slow thinking, my doctor has told me, is one symptom of an underactive thyroid. But it's hard to tell whether I'm thinking more slowly than I used to. The only way I can observe how I'm thinking is with my brain, and if my brain is slow, it won't necessarily know that it's slow, since it will be moving at a rate that seems appropriate to it.

And then, there have always been days when my mind does not make connections very fast, or when it makes the wrong connections, offering me the same wrong English words over and over again for a French phrase I'm trying to translate, making me feel I'm not up to doing this new translation job, which is so important to me. There have always been days when my mind is cloudy, or I forget things, or I feel as if I am in a different town or a different house—that something around me or about me is not normal.

While the doctor was explaining my condition to me, I took notes. I had to stop her once or twice and ask her to repeat something she had said. I told her that writing things down helped me to remember them. She said I would not have to take notes if my thyroid were more active. That made me a little angry, but I did not try to defend myself. I did not point out to her, for instance, that the self-help medical books tell you always to take notes during a meeting with a doctor, or that I have a habit of taking notes anyway, especially when I am on the telephone, and even during conversations when it is not at all necessary, when what I am hearing does not have to be remembered.

I did notice, one evening when I was playing a board game with my family, that several times I could not remember whose turn it was or see where my piece was on the board. This could have been due to my underactive thyroid.

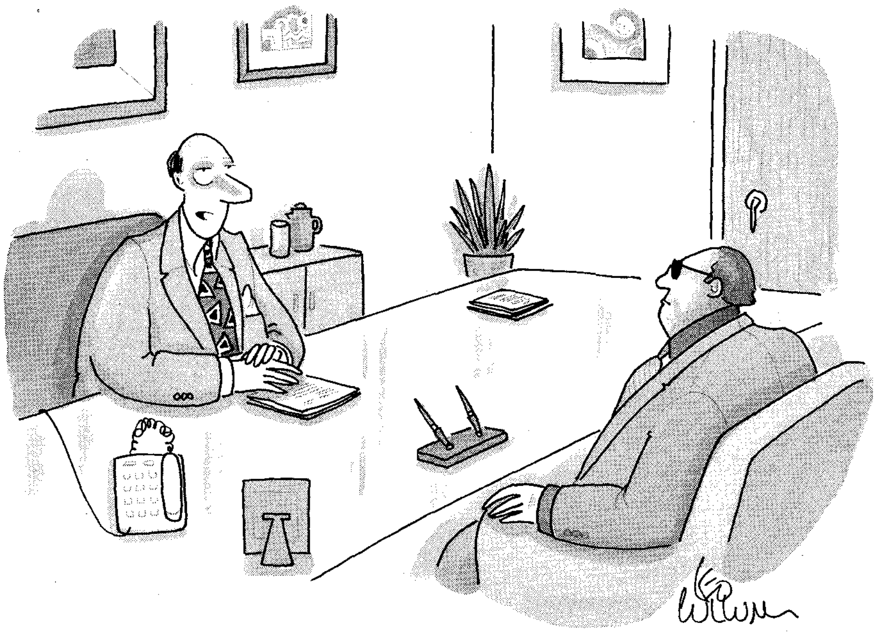
I thought I wasn't worried about my thyroid, since I believed that I could correct whatever problem there was with a strategy involving diet. I have been eating vegetables for dinner, and am only waiting for some more tests, which I will have this week, to come up with a complete dietary strategy. I truly believe that the body can cure itself of whatever is wrong with it, given the right diet and other treatments.

But maybe I am worried after all, because for the past week, ever since my doctor called me, I haven't been sleeping well. Then again, my trouble sleeping may also be due to the underactive thyroid.

My doctor is not actually a doctor, as my husband is quick to say: she's only a physician's assistant. He says this as though she may not know what she's talking about. He says this as though to protect me from her or from my condition. But I think she's careful and competent, and I believe her.

My physician's assistant told me that the thyroid gland controls every part of the body—not only the brain but also the heart, the digestion, the metabolism, the circulation, and other things I may be forgetting. In the case of a significantly underactive thyroid, everything slows down. I have a slow heartbeat, slow digestion, possibly slow thinking, a low temperature, cold hands and feet. Sometimes my heart rate goes down to fifty or below. I never knew what a thy-

SUSAN DERGES, "THE OBSERVER AND THE OBSERVED #5" (1991)/PAUL KASMIN GALLERY



"The entire West Coast division has to go. Make it look like an accident."

• •

roid gland did. Now I find out that it is so important that if it were allowed to continue functioning poorly like this, I would eventually die—die early, I mean. I have never associated myself with such an unexpected part of the body as the thyroid, so it feels as though my body is suddenly strange to me, or I am strange to myself.

Now I have learned more about what is wrong with me, and I do not think the body can always cure itself of whatever is wrong with it. Or, rather, I still believe this as a general principle, but I don't think my body can cure itself in this case, because no one seems to know enough about this particular disease, which is an auto-immune disorder. It is called Hashimoto's disease, though my husband keeps calling it Kurosawa's or Nagasaki's.

By now, I have also been to the first party, given for our sailor friend, as well as the second party, given for our dentist's wife. The parties were very different, even though they were in the same house. None of the guests were the same, except for us. The first party was informal, as was appropriate for a going-away party for a sailor. Neighbors wearing casual clothes came onto the lawn from shortcuts through the woods. At the second, there were trays of catered hors d'œuvres and a uniformed serving woman. At that party, I learned that not one, but two, of the dentist's wife's paintings had been stolen. I learned that the paintings were much smaller than I had thought. One from the same series was hanging on the wall in the faculty secretary's house. It was small enough to put in your pocket or your purse. The dentist was sitting in a wicker chair on the screened porch. I did not find it strange to see him there instead of in his office, but I also couldn't smile at him socially in quite the same way I would at anyone else, since he knows my teeth so well, particularly my upper-left incisor.

A corkscrew willow grows by a tiny stream in the front yard of the faculty secretary's house. At the first party, she cut a shoot of the corkscrew willow for me to take home and plant. I forgot to take it. From the second, I took several more shoots, and at home I put them in a bucket of water in the garage. But I forgot them for a few days. Then I offered them to a friend, but forgot to give them to her, and they withered.

I have also been to see a specialist in Albany several times, more times than were necessary, my husband believes. My husband thinks that the specialist should be able to assess my condition simply by looking at the results of the blood tests and reading the numbers, and that, like other doctors, he schedules extra office visits to make more money. But a friend of mine said, "With gland problems, they like to look at you." I do not remember which friend it was.

And yet this specialist seemed to avoid looking at me. At least he avoided it when he first walked into the room—he looked down at my file instead. He did eventually look at me, with his head cocked a little to one side and a slight smile on his face that seemed to express a private amusement that was not completely unfriendly. But he looked at me only when he was ready to deliver his opinion, which he had already formed by reading the numbers in my file.

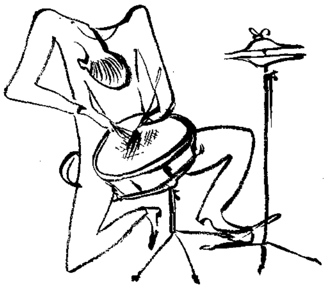
Meanwhile, my husband has been having trouble with his tomato plants. The dentist gave him four or five healthy, well-grown plants, neatly potted in peat pots, and they are doing well. In return, my husband was supposed to give him four or five of another variety. But most of these arrived in the mail half dead. Some died, two are doing fairly well, and the rest are not dead, but are not growing, either, at least not visibly. My husband does not want to give away the only two that are thriving. He also does not want to give the dentist spindly and sickly plants. He is waiting, time is passing, but the plants that were not growing well are not growing any better.

I have been trying to see if I am thinking more slowly than before. In my translation work, for instance, I see that I sometimes try to find an equivalent in English before I really understand the French. Then I realize that I don't understand the French, even after trying several times, and I cast my eye rather listlessly here and there within the paragraph, hoping that its meaning will fall into place, which it sometimes does. But today it does not, and then my mind wanders. I go back to work, look in the dictionary again, reading every word of a very long entry, but there's nothing in the dictionary that helps me. I want to put something down, anything at all, just to mark the place, so that I can go on translating and come back to the problem later. I need to put down something noticeably wrong, so that later I will see that the spot needs work, but everything I think of is so poor that it is embarrassing. I don't know why I should be embarrassed, since there is no one to see it, but I am embarrassed and will not go on until I put down something decent, though wrong. At least, this morning, as I was studying the dictionary carefully in order to see if I really wanted to use the word "embarrassment," I learned more about the word and its earlier, concrete meaning of "encumbrance" or "obstruction."

But then, even though I had been awake since six o'clock and had been working for an hour already, someone who didn't know me, in fact someone from the doctor's office, said to me on the phone, "Sounds like you're not up yet. Can you call me back when you are?" I was not insulted, but I was a little worried. I apparently sounded very slow on the phone, even if I did not think I was very slow. Now, if I do this whole translation with my mind not working very clearly, the translation may not be very good, and that would really be unfortunate, since some of my future income may depend on it.

Actually, what that receptionist or nurse took to be slowness may be something else, an attitude I now have that is more casual toward health-care professionals. I used to be very polite to them. I was slightly intimidated by them. Now I have noticed that I want to make fun of the men and joke with the women, or, I should say, joke with both the men and the women, but rather more aggressively with the men.

I first noticed this a few years ago with my oral surgeon. I liked him and respected him, but I noticed after a while that I could not deal in a straightforward, courteous way with him but had to make some kind of joke. That shocked me, because all my life I have been so courteous to health-care professionals, whatever I thought of them privately. The jokes just popped out as though someone else had taken over for a moment. Once, for instance, I saw a skull in his office and made what was no doubt the obvious joke—that it must be a former patient. He was startled, but did not seem to mind. Another time, when he had just hurt me badly while giving me a long injection in my gum, I bit down hard on his index finger. That was a reflex, not a joke. His two female assistants were amazed but also delighted. Although he frowned in pain and shook his finger in the air, the doctor took it very well and said that it happened from time to time. I slightly antagonized my present doctor, or physician's assistant, by saying that I did not like taking medicine because I did not like to be dependent on a drug. "What if I were lost in a jungle without my thyroid medicine?" I asked her, and it is true that I always believe that someday I may be lost in a jungle, even though we do not call them "jungles" anymore, and we are losing them anyway, so that the word "jungle" is becoming just an idea. She said I would get along well enough without it until I could find my way out of the jungle.



The receptionist or nurse this morning thought I wasn't up yet, because I didn't know the exact dose or the full name of my thyroid medicine. But I was careless about that information because of my skeptical attitude toward the health-care profession and because I do not try to conceal that attitude. Still, after our conversation, I noticed two other possible signs of poor functioning: a real-estate dealer I called on the phone later in the morning thought at first that I was another real-estate dealer. I asked her why she thought this. She had trouble answering, but I guessed that it might have been my lack of enthusiasm or a coldness in my tone of voice. Then, still later, when I was talking to my husband on the telephone, I was confusing and contradictory, and so long-winded that he compared me to a legal brief he was reading. This document was fifty pages long and concerned a possible class action against an insurance company for misrepresentation.

After wondering what to do about the tomato plants for some weeks, my husband told me that he was going to explain to the dentist that none of the plants were good enough to give him, though that is not strictly true. Then, just hours later, he told me that he had changed his mind. He would patch the

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soaker hose again and give the plants a little more time.

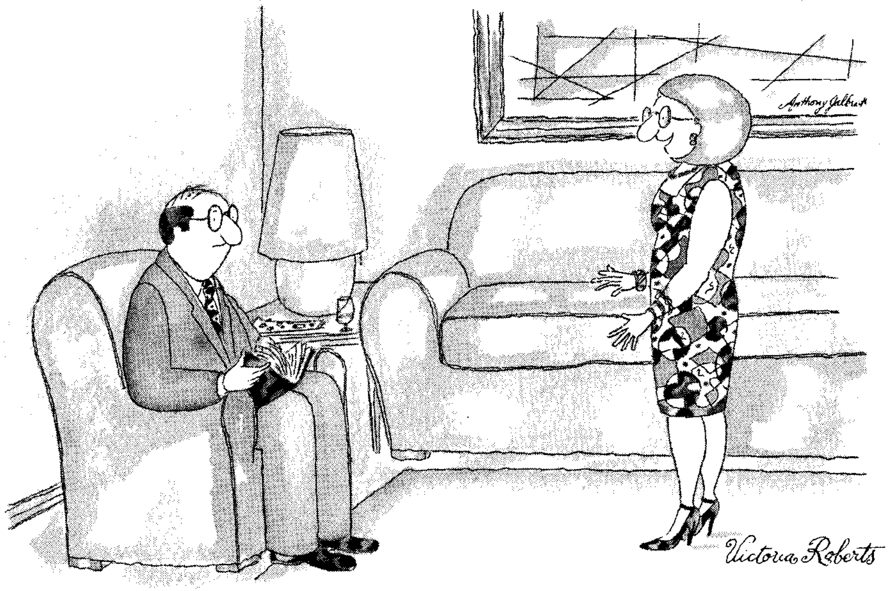
On the other hand, it occurs to me that maybe my brain is working well enough but simply more slowly than usual. Maybe my work will be good but it will take longer. Or maybe the dose of thyroid supplement I'm taking will be increased to the proper level soon enough so that by the time I reach the final draft of the translation I will be thinking sharply and quickly again. The dose can't be raised too abruptly, or my heart will suffer.

Another question I had recently was this: Is the rather pessimistic turn that my thoughts have taken these days due to the state of the world, which is bad and which gets worse more quickly than one can hope to save it, so that I become quite scared? Or is it due simply to the low level of my thyroid hormone, which would mean that maybe the world is not really in such a frightening state, and it seems that way only to me?

What an insult to the mind, I think then, that the chemicals of the body and nothing else are causing my thoughts, which I take so seriously, to move in a certain direction. What an insult to the amazing brain that such a simple thing as a level of chemicals should point it in a certain direction. Then I think, No, it's not an insult, I can think of it not as an insult but as part of another fascinating system. I can say, I would prefer to see it as part of one interesting system. Then I think, And, after all, it is this amazing brain that, in thinking this, is being so magnanimous to the dumb body. Though of course maybe it is the chemicals of the dumb body that are permitting the amazing brain to be magnanimous.

Now I have been to the dentist again for a cleaning and checkup. He found a large cracked filling in a tooth that he said should really have a crown or a cap. He said he had predicted this years ago. But when I objected to more major work, and asked for a postponement, he consented to treat it with a bonded filling that might or might not last for a long time. I was a little surprised that he agreed to this. I wondered if he was losing his enthusiasm, or losing the conviction that all my dentists seem to have had, that all work on my teeth should be as extreme and as complete as possible. I also noticed that he was curiously silent about tomatoes, saying nothing, either, about the other vegetables in his garden, or about his harvests. We talked instead about crowded holiday spots and the westward expansion of the United States during the nineteenth century. His grandfather had actually lived in the days of the westward expansion and used to talk to him about it. He said that it was surprising how recent that time was.

Our talk extended out into the reception area while I paid my bill and took a pencil from the box of gift pen-



"God may count the tears of women, but if from that he subtracts the sighs of men we're back to ground zero."

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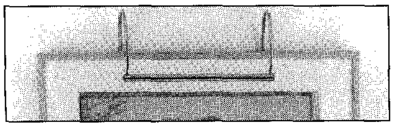

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cils. Considering the rapid population growth, he said, he did not want to come back after he died. I agreed that I would not want to come back, either, at least not as a person, adding the qualification, which I believe, that if we have to come back we may be safer coming back as cockroaches. The receptionist and dental hygienist, who were listening, looked surprised at this.

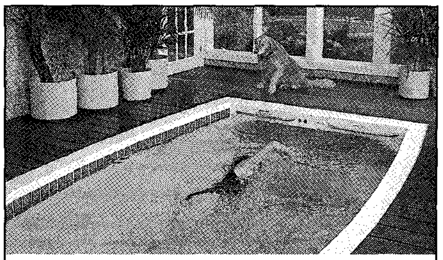
Now that the fall semester has begun, the woman who gave both parties is back at work at the college. Nearly every day, I read notices that she sends out to all the faculty. She has a very sharp and funny mind, a good education, and an interesting background, but her notices are deliberately neutral in tone and strictly practical. Some are about empty cardboard boxes free for the taking, some about stray cats on the campus, and a great many about the misuse of the Xerox machines. Only now and then can I detect, from the wonderfully correct or rhetorically balanced wording of these notices, how sharp she is.

Since the dentist's wife now has her degree, she is no longer studying with my husband, but I do not remember what she is doing, though I was told, probably by my husband.

We have been eating the tomatoes from our garden, though the harvest is not as good as it has been in other years. A woodchuck has dug a hole under the fence and up among the tomato plants and has been eating from them as they ripen. My husband puts heavy stones in the hole, but during the night the woodchuck moves them.

I thought that this was the end of it, that I would hear no more about the dentist and the results of the season's planting. I thought there was a slight embarrassment all around. But last week my husband came home from his three-month cleaning with a bag of onions and told me that the issue had been tacitly resolved, that he and the dentist had talked about the long dry spells coming at the wrong times and how the summer had been a poor one for tomatoes. Even the dentist's plants had not done well. And yesterday, during the insertion of my bonded filling, the dentist told me how he makes grape jelly. I am relieved that there are apparently no hard feelings. The dentist's onions are pretty, small, and fresh. I will want to think of some way of preparing them so that they will be particularly noticeable as we eat them.

My heart seems to be beating a little faster now. If it is true that I have been thinking more slowly, I have still been able to learn new things and remember them, in the past few months. I forget what we actually gave to our sailor friend, and there are other things I know I have forgotten, and still others that I must have forgotten, but I have learned the history of the word "embarrassment" and many other word histories; I have been introduced to the corkscrew willow; I have learned the term "bonded filling" and many other new definitions from the dictionaries, for instance, that the verb "flense" means to cut up a whale, and that the adjective "next" is the superlative of "nigh," meaning "near." I have learned two new terms for familiar things: in music, the Alberti bass, and in grammar, the Oxford comma. I have had new thoughts about the westward expansion of the United States. I have heard the expression "dead soldiers" twice in two days and learned that it means empty bottles. Maybe it also means anything that is of no more use to anyone, since I first heard it from a woman at a plant nursery who was looking through a bin of gourds and tossing out the rotten ones. I learned from the dentist that if I make grape jelly I should heat the sugar in the oven before adding it to the grape juice. I have learned more about the Kennedy family, and particularly Edward Kennedy, from a magazine in the dentist's office. I had no trouble, after a few minutes, recognizing Dvořák's "New World" Symphony on the radio while I was having my bonded filling put in. After reading the introduction again, having read it years ago and forgotten what I learned from it, I have learned again how Richard Henry Dana's book came to be written: when Dana was a student at Harvard, he fell ill and could not continue his studies, went to sea to recover his health, and subsequently wrote about his experiences in "Two Years Before the Mast," so that it is the book of a young man, whereas I had thought of it as the book of an older man just because it has been a classic for so many decades. What I don't know yet is why I see it so often in second-hand bookstores and at library sales. ◆



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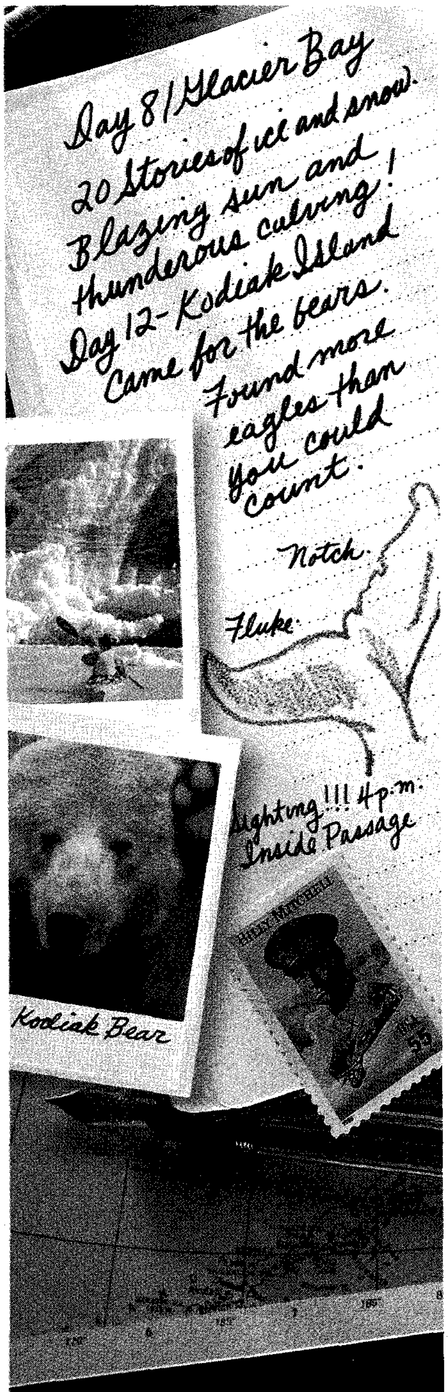
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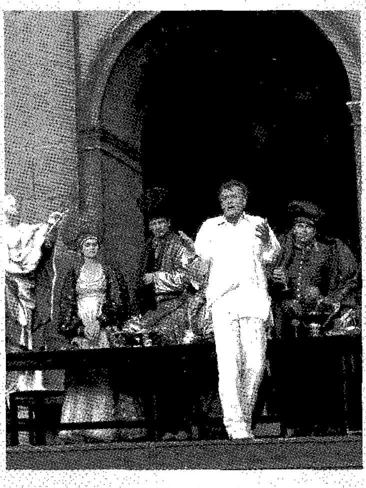

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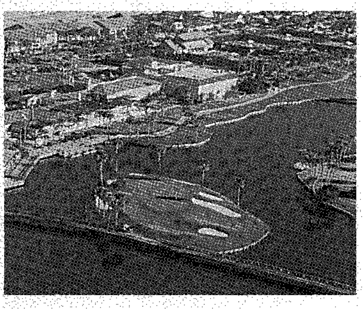

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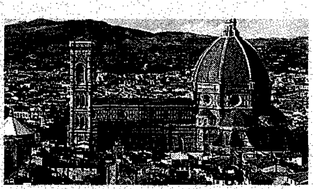

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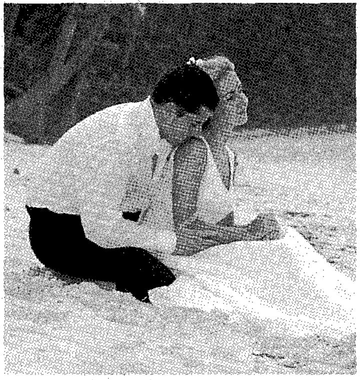

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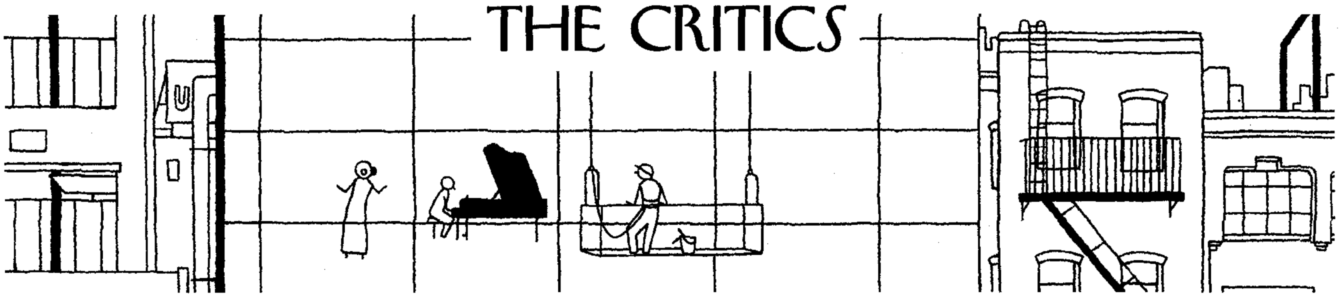

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Celebrating the Wizard's centennial.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

A hundred years ago, "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz," by L. Frank Baum, was published by the soon-to-be-defunct Chicago-based firm of George M. Hill. The Library of Congress is hosting a commemorative exhibition, and Norton has brought out a centennial edition of "The Annotated Wizard of Oz," edited and annotated by Michael Patrick Hearn ($39.95). Hearn, we learn from a preface by Martin Gardner, became a Baum expert while he was an English major at Bard College, and put forward an annotated "Wizard" when he was only twenty years old. Gardner, the polymathic compiler of "The Annotated Alice" (1960) and "More Annotated Alice" (1990), had been invited to do the same, in 1970, for Baum's fable; disclaiming competence, he recommended the young Bard Baumist to Clarkson N. Potter, who published Hearn's tome in 1973. In the years since, Hearn has produced annotated versions of Charles Dickens's "Christmas Carol" and Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn," added to the vast tracts of Baum scholarship, co-authored a biography of W. W. Denslow, the "Wizard" 's illustrator, and labored at a still unpublished "definitive biography" of Baum. Presumably, he and Norton have been patiently waiting, with fresh slews of annotation and illustration, for the centennial (which is also that of Dreiser's "Sister Carrie," Conrad's "Lord Jim," Colette's first Claudine novel, and Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams") to roll around.

It is not hard to imagine why Gardner ducked the original assignment. The two "Alice" books are more literate, intricate, and modernist than Baum's "Wonderful Wizard," and Lewis Carroll's mind, laden with mathematical lore, chess moves, semantic puzzles, and the riddles of Victorian religion, was more susceptible to explication, at least by the like-minded Gardner. But Baum, Hearn shows in his introduction, was a complicated character, too—a Theosophist, an expert on poultry, a stagestruck actor and singer, a fine amateur photographer, an inventive household tinkerer, a travelling china salesman, and, only by a final shift, a children's writer. He was forty-four when "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" was published. His prior bibliography included a directory of stamp dealers, a treatise on the mating and management of Hamburg chickens, a definitive work entitled "The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows and Interiors" (also celebrating its centennial), and a few small volumes for children. Baum's life (1856-1919) reflects the economic and ideological adventurism of his America. Hearn tells us that his father, Benjamin Ward Baum, "followed nearly as many careers as his son would. He was building a barrel factory in Chittenango [New York] when the boy was born, but made a fortune in the infant Pennsylvania oil industry only a few years later." Lyman Frank, one of nine children, of whom five survived into adulthood, was raised on a luxurious estate in Syracuse and educated by English tutors. He was a dreamy reader of a boy. He lasted only two years at Peekskill Military School, and went on to Syracuse Classical School, without, apparently, graduating. He married the twenty-year-old Maud Gage when he was twenty-six and, grown into a lanky man with a large mustache, was touring as the star of a musical melodrama, "The Maid of Arran," which he had written—book, lyrics, and music. His mother-in-law, Matilda Joslyn Gage, was a prominent feminist and a keen Theosophist; she had not wanted her daughter to leave Cornell to marry an actor. But Maud did anyway, and when she became pregnant Frank left the theatre. With his uncle, Adam Baum, he established Baum's Castorine Company, marketing an axle grease invented by his brother Benjamin and still, in this slippery world, being manufactured.

Maud's sisters and brother had all settled in the Dakota Territory; in 1888 Frank moved with his family to Aberdeen, South Dakota, where he opened a variety store, Baum's Bazaar. Drought and depression caused the store to fail; in 1890 Baum took over a weekly newspaper, calling it the *Saturday Pioneer*, and by 1891 it, too, was failing. He found employment in Chicago, first as a reporter and then as a travelling salesman with the wholesale china-and-glassware firm of Pitkin & Brooks. The two-and-a-half-year Dakota interval gave him, however, the Plains flavor crucial to the myth of Dorothy and the Wizard; gray desolation and hardscrabble rural survival compose the negative of which Oz is the colorful print. In Baum's Kansas, "even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere." Chicago's spectacular White City, built of plaster and cement for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition on the lakeside marshes, gave both Baum and his illustrator, Denslow, the glitz and scale, but not the tint, of Oz's Emerald City. A contemporary writer, Frances Hodgson Burnett, likened the White City to the City Beautiful in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and wrote:

> Endless chains of jewels seemed strung and wound about it. The Palace of Flowers held up a great crystal of light glowing against the dark blue of the sky, towers and domes were crowned and diademed, thousands of jewels hung among the masses of leaves, or reflected themselves, sparkling in the darkness of the lagoons, fountains of molten jewels sprung up, and flamed and changed.

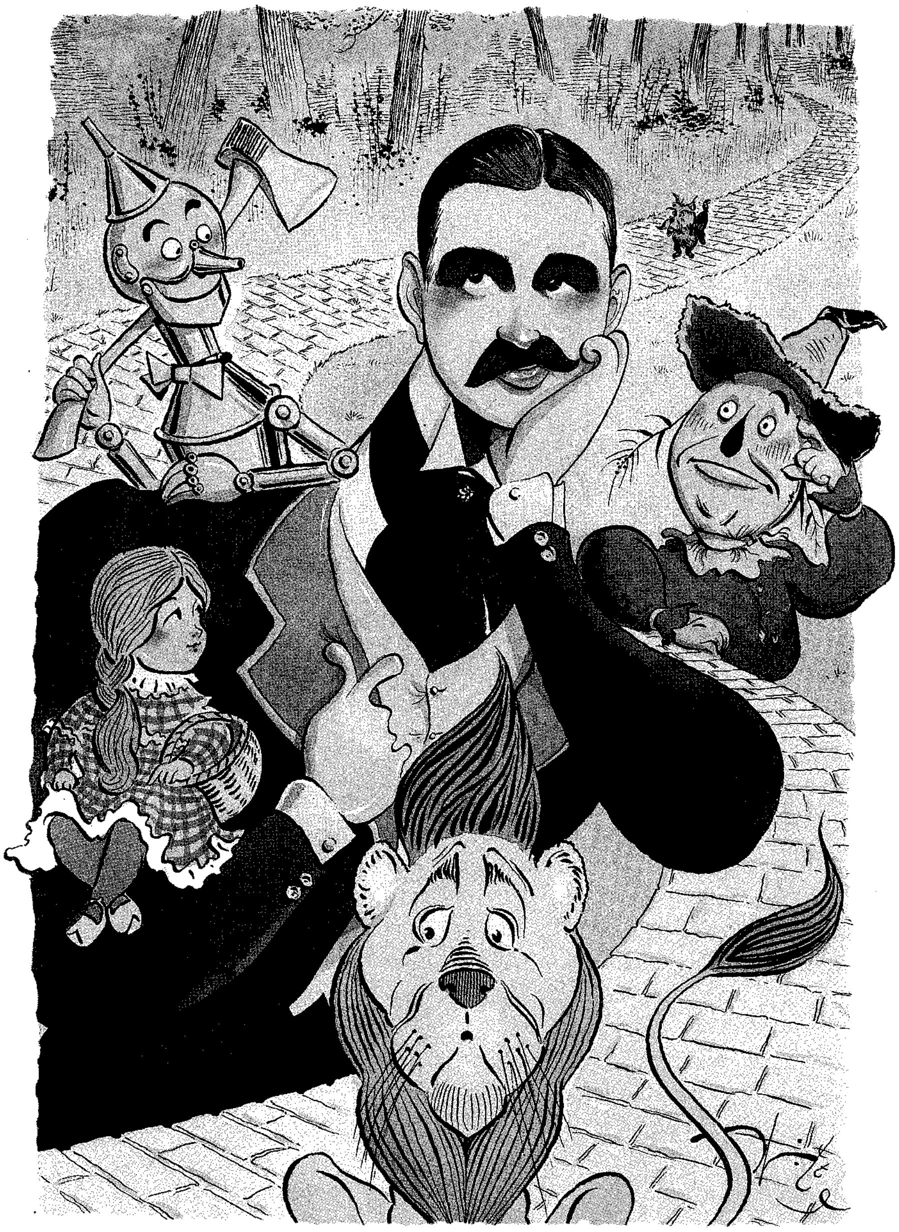
Woven of electric illusion (newly feasible, thanks to the Wizard of Menlo Park) and quickly an abandoned ruin, the White City fed into Baum's book a melancholy undertone of insubstantiality. A Bobbs-Merrill press release in 1903 claimed that the name Oz came from the "O-Z" drawer of the author's filing cabinet, but the name resonates with a Shelley poem known to most Victorians:

> And on the pedestal these words appear:
> "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
> Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
> Nothing beside remains.

A note of hollowness, of dazzling fraud, of frontier fustian and quackery taints the Wizard in the first of the many Oz books, before a plethora of wonders turns him into a real sorcerer. In the M-G-M movie, the seekers along the yellow brick road rapturously sing, "The Wizard of Oz is one because . . . because of the wonderful things he does"; then it turns out that what he does is concoct visual hokum with a crank and escape in a mismanaged hot-air balloon.

But Baum, who turned to editing and writing as a way of spending more time with his four young sons, proved to be an authentic wizard as a children's author. He had made the acquaintance of William Wallace Denslow, a footloose artist from Philadelphia who had come to Chicago for the Exposition; the two had definite and ambitious ideas about what children's books should look like, and paid for the color plates of their first collaboration, a book of Baum's verses called "Father Goose, His Book." The book attracted praise from Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and Admiral George Dewey and, Hearn says, "became the best-selling picture book of 1900." That year saw the publication of no fewer than five titles by Baum, of which the "Wizard" was the last. Hill was overwhelmed by orders, and went back to press four times, for a total of ninety thousand copies. The Minneapolis *Journal* called it, in November, "the best children's story-book of the century"—high praise if the nineteenth century was meant, more modest if the infant twentieth.

In 1902, the George M. Hill Company went bankrupt, in spite of Baum's success, and the rights to the "Wizard" were placed in the crasser hands of Bobbs-Merrill; meanwhile, Baum and Denslow parted, each taking the Oz characters with him, since their contract provided for separate ownership of text and illustrations. That same year saw the opening, at Chicago's Grand Opera House, of "The Wizard of Oz," a "musical extravaganza" created by Julian Mitchell, who was later to mastermind "The Ziegfeld Follies." Mitchell had scrawled "No Good" across Baum's script for a five-act operetta closely based on his tale, and substituted a vaudevillian hodgepodge that capped its Chicago success with a year-and-a-half run on Broadway and a road career that lasted, off and on, until 1911. The extravaganza increased Baum's wealth, but it also encouraged his tropism toward the theatrical. His first sequel to the "Wizard," "The Marvelous Land of Oz," in 1904, was designed to be the basis of another extrav-

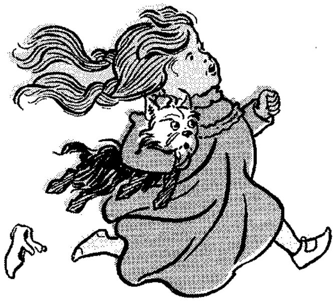


As a writer, Baum rarely knew when to quit, unfurling marvel after marvel.

MICHAEL WITTE

aganza, featuring the vaudeville performers David C. Montgomery and Fred A. Stone, who had played the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow in the Mitchell production. The book was dedicated to them and loaded with patter and puns suitable to their routines. It sold as a book but failed as a musical called "The Woggle-Bug," with lyrics by Baum and without, in the end, Montgomery and Stone. Anticipating the piggyback publicity system perfected by Walt Disney, Baum promoted this unfortunate production with a "Woggle-Bug Contest" in a Sunday comic page, drawn by Walt McDougall and titled "Queer Visitors from the Marvelous Land of Oz."

Despite frail health (angina, gallstones, inflamed appendix), Baum was a whirlwind of activity until his death, at the age of sixty-two. Along with thirteen Oz sequels, he wrote a teen-age-oriented "Aunt Jane's Nieces" series under the name Edith Van Dyne, young people's books under four other pseudonyms, an adult novel published anonymously, and many unpublished plays. Splendidly dressed in a white frock coat with silk lapels, he toured with film-and-slide presentations called "The Fairylogue and Radio-Plays." A reviewer in the Chicago *Tribune* wrote that "his ability to hold a large audience's attention during two hours of tenuous entertainment was amply demonstrated"; these early electronic productions were expensive, however, and by 1911 had helped bankrupt him. Thriftily moving his California winter residence from the Hotel del Coronado to a "handsome bungalow he christened Ozcot," in Hollywood, Baum found himself surrounded by the burgeoning movie industry without being able to tap into it profitably. The Oz Film Manufacturing Company, with Baum as president, produced some silent films, beginning with "The Patchwork Girl of Oz" in 1914, but, dismissed as "kiddie shows," they fell short at the box office. In 1925, six years after Baum's death, a movie of "The Wizard of Oz" was released; according to Hearn in one of his sterner moods, it was "totally lacking the magic of Baum's book" (though a Laurel-less Oliver Hardy played the Tin Woodman), and "had a dreadful script, written in part by the author's son Frank J. Baum." It was M-G-M's 1939 adaptation, of course, that hit the jackpot: the three-million-dollar film showed no profit on its original release, but it became a staple of postwar television. A hundred years after the "Wizard" 's publication, the movie is the main road into Oz.



Denslow's final drawing captures Dorothy's hurry to get home.

W. W. DENSLOW

Oz had very quickly become zoned for commercial activity, and there is something depressing about the chronicle of its exploitation, a chronicle that Hearn caps with a compendious footnote taking us up through the all-black "Wiz" (stage 1975, movie 1978) and the dead-on-arrival Disney "Return to Oz" (1985). And then there is the upcoming television series "Lost in Oz," produced by Tim Burton. It is hard to read Baum's later Oz books without feeling the exploitation in progress, by a writer who only dimly understands his own masterpiece. After his death, the series was extended by Ruth Plumly Thompson, who between 1921 and 1939 added nineteen titles; then, briefly, by John R. Neill, whose spidery, often insipid drawings illustrate all the Oz books but the first; by Jack Snow, a "minor science fiction writer"; by Rachel Cosgrove; by Eloise Jarvis McGraw and Lauren McGraw Wagner; and even by Baum's son, who legally battled his mother for the precious trademark "Oz." And, Hearn indefatigably tells us, "of late there has grown up a peculiar literary sub-genre of adult novels drawing on the Oz mythology," such as Geoff Ryman's "Was" (1992) and Gregory Maguire's "Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West" (1995)—the products, presumably, of Oz-besotted children now aged into postmodern creators freed from fear of copyright infringement.

The potent images of the "Wizard" do cry out for extension and elaboration. The M-G-M motion picture improves upon the book in a number of ways. It eliminates, for example, the all too Aesopian (and, prior to computer graphics, probably unfilmable) episode wherein the Queen of the mice and her many minions transport the Cowardly Lion out of the poppy bed where he has fallen asleep; instead, it retrieves from the 1902 musical the effective stage business that had a sudden snowstorm annul the spell of the poppies. The movie weeds out a number of extravagant beasts and the especially artificial episode of "the Dainty China Country" so quaintly planted on the path to the witch's lair. The scenario amplifies the role of the Wicked Witch of the West, showing her as the source of all the obstacles in the pilgrims' path, as she watches them on the private television of her crystal ball. In the book, she is a relatively passive presence, easily doused ("I never thought a little girl like you would ever be able to melt me and end my wicked deeds. Look out—here I go!"), compared with the cackling green-faced film presence of Margaret Hamilton, who dies mourning her "beautiful wickedness!" Once she is dead, the film picks up speed; after the Wizard's unmasking and his unplanned departure, it is virtually over, where Baum's tale dillydallies through further complications on the way to the Good Witch of the South, with fresh humanoid gadgetry like Fighting Trees and armless Hammer-Heads and a mechanical plot dependency on the Golden Cap and its three-wish control of the Winged Monkeys. As a writer, Baum rarely knew when to quit, unfurling marvel after marvel while the human content—a content shaped by nonmagical limitations—leaked away. He did not quite grasp that his "Wizard" concerns our ability to survive disillusion; miracles are humbug.

The Hollywood film begins with the human, gray Kansas and, unlike the book, plants on that drab land all the actors who will dominate Oz—the three farmhands, the wicked Almira Gulch on her bicycle, Professor Marvel in his flimsy van. They are Kansans, and Dorothy returns to them. Hearn calls it "unforgivable" that the M-G-M movie cast Oz as a dream; but Dorothy on awakening protests, "It wasn't a dream." It was an alternative reality, an inner depiction of how we grow. As Jerome Charyn observes in his excellent "Movie-

THE WIND IS CALM AND COMES FROM ANOTHER WORLD

Overcast August morning.
                    A little rain in the potholes,
A little shade on the shade.
The world is unconversational, and bides its own sweet time.
What you see is what you see, it seems to say, but we
Know better than that,
          and keep our eyes on the X, the cloud-ridden sky.

Heliotrope, we say, massaging its wings. Heliotrope.

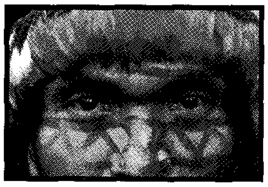
—*Charles Wright*

land: Hollywood and the Great American Dream Culture" (1989), "The whole film was about metamorphosis." Judy Garland, who was sixteen and noticeably buxom in the role of Baum's prepubescent Dorothy, was "a woman who seemed to flower from an ordinary little girl." Growth is metamorphosis, and self-understanding is growth. The Scarecrow already has brains, the Tin Woodman is sentimental to a fault, the Lion has courage enough, but until the Wizard bestows external evidences (in the movie more wittily than in the book) they feel deficient. Dorothy, capable and clear-sighted from the start, needs only to accept the grayness of home as a precious color, and to wish to return as ardently as she wished to escape "Over the Rainbow"—the movie's grand theme song, nearly removed from the final cut.

Like Charyn and Salman Rushdie (who has extolled the "Wizard" as "a parable of the migrant condition"), I belong to the generation more affected by the movie than by the book. For the testimony of one who read all the Oz books with adolescent credulity and delight, Gore Vidal's long essay of 1977, printed in two parts in *The New York Review of Books*, is impressive and peppery. He sees Baum as a protester against the violence of the rising American empire and "the iron Puritan order." It is true that an undercurrent of dissidence in the Oz books seems to have antagonized some librarians and critics; the director of the Detroit Library System, Ralph Ulveling, in 1957 pronounced them guilty of "negativism" and "a cowardly approach to life." Baum, in his introduction to the "Wizard," strikes a challenging note; he deplores the "horrible and blood-curdling" incidents contained in "the old-time fairy tale" and promises his readers "a modernized fairy tale, in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heart-aches and nightmares are left out." American Theosophy, to which Baum had been introduced by his formidable mother-in-law, mixed spiritualism and Buddhist and Hindu beliefs with a meliorism that rejected the darker, Devil-acknowledging side of Christianity. "God is Nature, and Nature God," Baum said; yet he also professed an animistic vision in which

> every bit of wood, every drop of liquid, every grain of sand or portion of rock has its myriads of inhabitants. . . . These invisible and vapory beings are known as Elementals. . . . They are soulless, but immortal; frequently possessed of extraordinary intelligence, and again remarkably stupid.

Madame H. P. Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society, in her book "Isis Unveiled" (1878) wrote of these Elementals as "the creatures evolved in the four kingdoms of earth, air, fire, and water, and called by the kabalists gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and undines." This giddying, virtually bacterial multitudinousness came to characterize Oz as sequels multiplied its regions and its strange and magical tribes; but the "Wizard" itself presents an uncluttered cosmogony, drawn in bright blunt tints. According to Theosophy, our astral bodies come in distinct colors, and so do the regions of Oz, with their inhabitants. As Vidal points out, Oz exists in orderly patches like the extensive gardens that Baum remembered from



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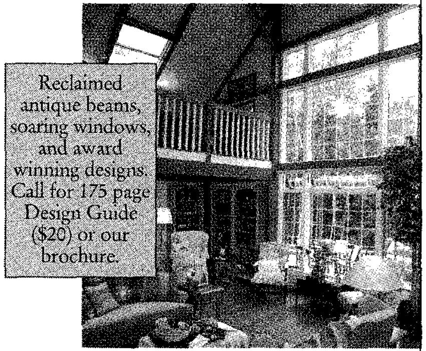

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his childhood home, and which he recreated in the geometrical plots of his garden at Ozcot.

The evils of capitalism, whose rewards proved so fickle for Baum, are absent from his alternative world. Enemies of socialism find in "The Emerald City" this much quoted passage:

> There were no poor people . . . because there was no such thing as money, and all property of every sort belonged to the Ruler. The people were her children, and she [Princess Ozma] cared for them. Each person was given freely by his neighbors whatever he required for his use, which is as much as anyone may reasonably desire.

But the proletariat does not rule; rather, it is ruled in a mock-medieval manner, by benevolent tyrants more often than not female, in keeping, perhaps, with the feminist tendencies of Theosophy and Matilda Gage's militant suffragism. Baum's rulers have a parental absolutism: Glinda is the ideal, ever-resourceful mother and the Wizard a typically bumbling father in Oz's sitcom as Baum first conceived it. Though he supported the populist William Jennings Bryan in 1896 and 1900, and the literature of the late nineteenth century abounds in literary Utopias, Oz is too unearthly to carry much political punch. It is constructed not of revolutionary intent but of wishful thinking. What earthiness the "Wizard" does have derives in considerable part from Denslow's sturdy, antic illustrations. Denslow, we learn in Hearn's "Annotated Wizard," sometimes operated independently of the text: he drew a bear where Baum mentions a tiger, crowns the Lion before the author does, dresses Dorothy in her old gingham frock when Baum still has her in her Emerald City silks, and consistently omits (as does the movie) the "round, shining mark" that the Good Witch of the North plants, as protection, on her forehead with a kiss.

A centennial is a time for praise, but this reader is inclined to accept the invitation to argue with Hearn when he states, "Arguably there have been three great classic quests in American literature, Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or The Whale* (1851), Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1883), and L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900)." Whatever their flaws of carelessness or aesthetic miscalculation, the first two titles were gloriously *written*, in the ambition of telling all the truth, "heart-aches and nightmares" included. The "Wizard" is relatively a lucky bauble, in the flat clear style of a man giving dictation. Nor does it seem to me true that "Uncle Henry and Aunt Em have come to symbolize the stern American farmer and his wife as much as the couple in Grant Wood's famous painting *American Gothic* have." Hearn has been too long peering through the magnifying glass of *The Baum Bugle*, the triquarterly publication of the International Wizard of Oz Club, "founded in 1957 by thirteen-year-old Justin G. Schiller." In the course of his devotedly researched footnotes, Hearn sometimes nods into critical banality: "Much of the charm and wit of *The Wizard of Oz* relies on Baum's irony and amusing incongruity"; the Cowardly Lion "proves Ernest Hemingway's dictum that courage is grace under pressure." A juster analogy, drawn by Hearn more than once, is with "The Pilgrim's Progress," another few-frills picaresque search story by an author in his forties with a habit of public performance (Bunyan was a preacher). The "Wizard" is a "Pilgrim's Progress" emptied of religion, except for the Theosophist inkling that there are many universes. At a time when children's literature was still drenched in what Hearn calls "the putrid Puritan morality of the Sunday schools," Baum produced a refreshingly agnostic fantasy. The witches are too comically wicked to be evil. The humbug Wizard, accused by Dorothy of being "a very bad man," protests, "I'm really a very good man; but I'm a very bad Wizard, I must admit." In another bold stroke of American simplification, Baum invented escapism without escape. Dorothy opts to forsake Oz; gray, windswept Kansas is reinstated (less thumpingly than in the movie) as the seat of lasting, familial happiness. Indeed, as a practical matter it is easier to color with contentment the place where we are than to find a Technicolor paradise. Denslow's last drawing shows the return with more exuberance than Baum's prose manages. In her hurry, little Dorothy runs so hard that her silver shoes, Baum's less photogenic original of M-G-M's glistening ruby slippers, are flying off; we feel her rounding the bases (Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, Cowardly Lion) to home plate. ♦

BOOKS

DUMBING DOWN

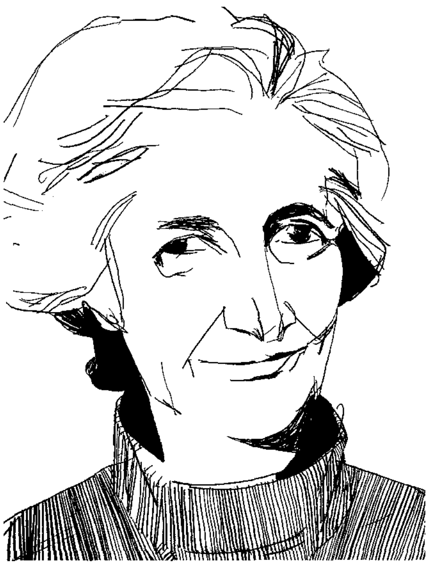
Did progressivism ruin our public schools?

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

You'll never get in trouble for using the word "crisis" to refer to the state of American public education. The number of public-school students (more than forty-six million) is higher than it has ever been; about ninety per cent of schoolchildren go to public school. Public-school students make up more than a sixth of the population. All the same, the educational idea that gets the most attention is vouchers, because it carries with it the pleasingly dramatic implication that public schools are so awful that there's nothing to do about them but walk away and start over.

To think of vouchers as the main issue in public education, though, is to mistake the tributary for the river. The main issue is the "educational standards" movement—the push to make public schools raise all students to a demonstrated level of competence in reading and math and history and science. The standards movement is both more important—potentially a government initiative of New Deal magnitude—and, inside the education world, more controversial than most people realize. In "Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms" (Simon & Schuster; $30), Diane Ravitch explains that the standards movement became necessary only because the pedagogical establishment spent the entire twentieth century dismantling the standards that existed at the century's outset.

Ravitch served as Assistant Secretary of Education in the Bush Administration, and she was an education adviser to George W. Bush's Presidential campaign. She would have been a fair bet to be appointed Secretary of Education if he won, but late last year she resigned from the campaign in protest over Bush's initial refusal to meet with the Log Cabin Republicans (something that nobody else in the Bush campaign felt moved to do). Trained at Teachers College at Columbia, the country's premier graduate school of education, and a graduate of public schools herself, Ravitch is far better acquainted with the world of public education than most other conservative writers on the subject. Her preoccupation with public education and with Teachers College, her prickliness about matters of principle, and her staunch conservatism are all on display in "Left Back."



Diane Ravitch shows that the education battles of today have century-old roots.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

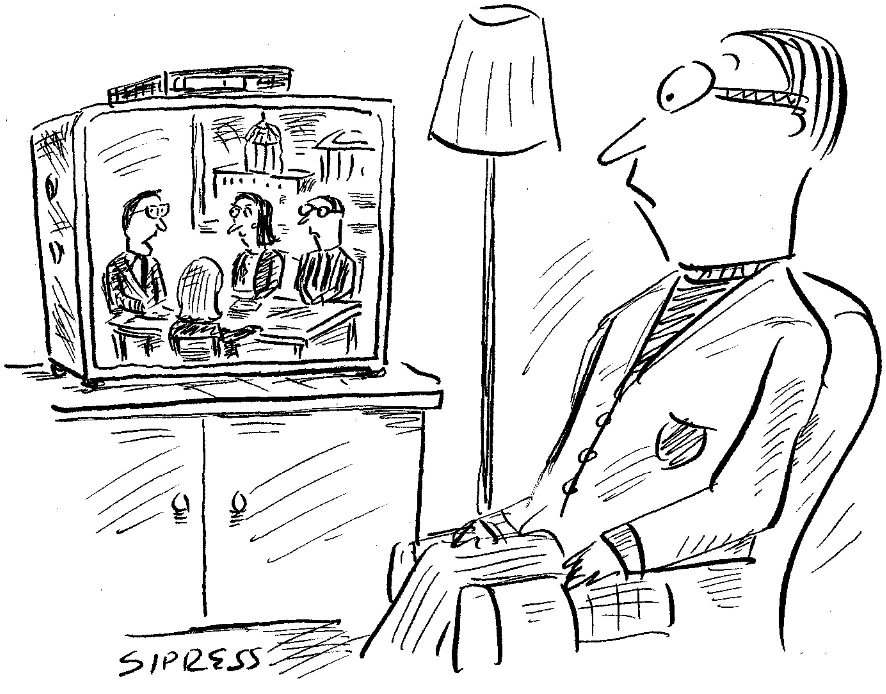
The bulk of "Left Back" is a critical history of progressive education during the first half of the twentieth century. "Progressive education" is, as Ravitch readily admits, a slippery term, covering a variety of movements that gathered under the shadow of the educator-philosopher John Dewey. A progressive school originally meant one in which there were no grades or competitive sports, and which emphasized nature study and handcrafts in addition to academics. Teachers were nurturing and tolerant. Students coöperated rather than competing. Schoolwork took the form of group projects, not of worksheets and tests. The child was supposed to blossom naturally, rather than being forced to conform to deadening social norms through the use of drills, memorization exercises, and competitive rankings. Think of Robin Williams in "Dead Poets Society" and you have the idea. Although there have been only a handful of such schools, a lot that goes on in the great mass of public schools has some connection with the progressive movement: the use of "activity centers" as an alternative to rows of desks, the practice of teaching through cross-disciplinary projects instead of through strict concentration on each subject, the replacement of history by "social studies" and English by "language arts." What all varieties of progressivism have had in common is the claim to be more modern and scientific than what went before, more firmly grounded in research about how children learn. All showily assumed the role of protector of the true interests of the child. All supposed themselves to be reforming the schools now as a way of reforming the world a generation from now.

Ravitch's main complaint about progressive education is that it relentlessly attacked "the academic mission of the schools." At the start of the twentieth century, she says, most public-school students took courses in foreign languages, serious science and mathematics, literature, and history. In 1910, half of all American high-school students were studying Latin. By the close of the century, progressive education had spoiled everything. Schools had added to their menu a huge collection of supposedly useful junk courses—from drivers' education to household financial management—and had recast themselves as a kind of personnel office for America. In the process, the old, academic version of school got squeezed: material was taken out of the curriculum altogether, and, more important, a true liberal education came to be offered only to a minority of students, with the rest relegated to the vocational-industrial or "general" curriculum.

The story of this sad decline is a hard one to make vivid, because the history of education, unlike that of war or politics, is played out in the form of journal articles and speeches at conferences, which set a tone that then resonates across the thousands of American schools; you're left with a saga without scenes, or even events. Still, Ravitch goes at it with energy and enthusiasm, constructing a gallery of heroes and villains many readers won't have heard of. (One of the virtues of "Left Back" is that it reminds us that most of the educational battles of the moment, which are usually discussed as if they were carryovers from the cultural warfare of the sixties, have actually been going on for a hundred years.)

In 1892, the National Education Association appointed a blue-ribbon Committee of Ten to produce a report on public education. In Ravitch's view, this report, which "assumed that every child would benefit by receiving a liberal education of the highest quality," was an ideal from which we have been steadily retreating. The following year, Columbia University officially adopted Teachers College as its school of education—thereby, as Ravitch tells the tale, creating an institution that would consistently undermine the goals of the Committee of Ten and replace them with various forms of self-congratulatory educational hooey. Ravitch's bad guys—Herbert Spencer, G. Stanley Hall, Edward L. Thorndike, Lewis Terman, David Snedden, William Kilpatrick, Harold Rugg, W. W. Charters, George Counts, and James Bryant Conant, half of whom were on the faculty of Teachers College—always presented themselves as champions of democracy, science, and practicality, while pushing the view that most public-school students were incapable of benefitting from an academic education and should instead be inculcated with "life-adjustment skills." By the time they were done reforming education, Ravitch writes, there was "nothing it could not be expected to do—except teach academic subjects to the majority of its students." The good guys—Lester Frank Ward, William Torrey Harris, William Bagley, Carleton Washburne, Isaac Kandel, Michael Demiashkevich, and Robert Maynard Hutchins—refused to compromise on the importance of the academic curriculum.

By 1950, the bad guys had won. What had once been the school curriculum was now the college-prep curriculum, reserved for only a minority of students and eroding even so, because colleges now admitted students on the basis of aptitude tests like the S.A.T., rather than on demonstrated mastery of mathematics, science, foreign languages, literature, and history. Schoolchildren were subjected to tracking, grouping, and sorting schemes, based on the notion of most people's innate incapacity, and so millions of them were denied what Ravitch would consider the fundamental equipment necessary for educated citizenship. Teaching had become defined primarily as a matter of pedagogical technique, rather than of imparting knowledge; Ravitch reports that only thirty-eight per cent of today's schoolteachers majored in an academic subject. Schools were attempting to instruct their students—especially girls, minorities, and children of immigrants—in factory work, housekeeping, and personal mores, on the demeaning theory that they would find it more useful to study, as one educator put it, "genuine life problems" instead of "dry, uninteresting subject matter." These changes encouraged students to fit in to a predestined social slot rather than to learn. Yet they were made under the banner of a joyous, supportive view of childhood, with educators playing the intoxicating role of "makers of society." At every moment, the progressives assumed that the American economy would remain as it was, and so they failed to see that they weren't doing most students a favor by steering them toward factory work.



"Welcome to 'All About the Media,' where members of the media discuss the role of the media in media coverage of the media."

Because the story Ravitch tells involves a long series of defeats for her side, punctuated by her heroes' doomed protests against the way things were going, much of "Left Back" takes the form of ironic recitations of views she disagrees with, plus the occasional horrified comment ("'The changes in the public schools of Hawaii, imposed on uncomprehending students and parents, were described by the principal as 'a living object lesson in democracy,' but in retrospect they seem more like a class-biased, racist effort to restrict educational and social opportunities"). What gives "Left Back" its heart is Ravitch's constant, impassioned insistence that schools must make an "intense moral commitment to the intellectual development of each child," teaching all pupils an academic curriculum and not putting them on different tracks leading to different destinations in life. If Ravitch had merely defended the academic curriculum, she would have produced a valuable book, but, by linking this position inextricably to educational universalism, she has also made herself into a plausible champion of democracy. This is as good an example as we have of what Bush's "compassionate conservatism" could mean in practical terms.

Unfortunately, Ravitch's narrow focus on the progressives' flaws makes it sound as if holding on to the academic curriculum would have been easy. It wouldn't. The retraction of the academic curriculum coincided with—indeed, was pushed along by—an enormous expansion of the public schools. Offering all children through the age of seventeen an education at taxpayer expense was one of the great achievements of the United States, something that no other country had done. In 1900, only six per cent of American eighteen-year-olds had a high-school diploma; by 1960, seventy per cent did. During the apogee of the academic curriculum, high schools may not have been internally élitist, but going to high school was itself an élite experience. And the increases in the American high-school population came at a time when—again, in contrast with the rest of the world—our schools were taking in students from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and national experiences.

One reason progressive education caught on was that it could serve as a playbook for making high school universal. Except for a handful of Ravitch's good guys, educators believed it was impossible to take in new students in such numbers and variety without diluting standards. Ravitch displays her home-team sympathies in underplaying the conservative contribution to educational élitism. She reports in a soft voice that Michael Demiashkevich, a Russian émigré whose 1935 traditionalist opus, "An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education," makes him one of Ravitch's heroes, wanted to begin tracking in fifth grade and to train those in the small academic group to be the leaders of society—but this was an even harsher version of what she berates Conant for proposing. Even Ravitch's hero of heroes, William Bagley, "the leader of the opposition" to progressive education during the first half of the twentieth century, believed in only eight years of common academic schooling. In fact, conservative skepticism about universal academic education extends from the eugenicists of the early twentieth century to Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray at century's end. ("The Bell Curve," in insistent italics, takes a position precisely the opposite of Ravitch's: "Specifically, critics of American education must come to terms with the reality that *in a universal education system, many students will not reach the level of education that most people view as basic.*") Nor does Ravitch acknowledge that it was the liberal-progressive element in education that was mainly responsible for a retreat from harsh tracking schemes during the last third of the twentieth century.

The question of how to implement a more academic curriculum for everyone is not a minor, technical one—it's the consuming debate in American education right now. If Ravitch had acknowledged that she is proposing a program simple in principle but incredibly difficult to execute, it would have vitiated the moral simplicity that is one of her book's great strengths. As it is, she leaves us sold on the nobility of her goal but without much guidance on how to achieve it.

In New York, for example, the state Board of Regents announced in 1996 that it was going to gradually eliminate the long-standing policy of offering two classes of high-school diplomas, Regents (that is, upper-track academic) and general: in the future everyone must meet the requirements for a Regents diploma. The Regents are dismantling a long-established system, and are doing something that Ravitch would surely approve of, but implementing the all-Regents system has been a bloody battle, and it isn't over yet. Academic-standards upholders and upper-middle-class parents complain that the Regents exams have been dumbed down and the passing grades made too low; defenders of immigrants, minorities, and the poor warn that a whole class of people who would have been proud high-school graduates will now be denied their diplomas. As the standards movement rolls on, we're going to need to know what to do about this kind of thing.

So far, the politics of standards has taken the form of the outside world's imposing big, tough ideas on reluctant, even resentful educators. The process began with the publication, in 1983, of the Reagan Administration's "A Nation at Risk" report, which was seen in most schools of education as needlessly alarmist but nonetheless had a galvanizing effect. With the notable exception of the late Albert Shanker, the head of the American Federation of Teachers, the standards movement has been driven by parents, politicians, and business interests, not teachers' unions or education schools. The specific classroom techniques that almost invariably go along with the movement—more drill, the use of phonics and times tables in early-grade reading and math instruction, intensive prepping for state tests of basic skills, the use of highly scripted and regimented curricula in the lowest-performing schools, the memorization of facts in fields like history and literature—run counter to progressive dogma. But the movement has enormous, surprising political force. Both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush made themselves plausible as Presidential candidates by embracing the standards movement in the states where they were governor. Bush established himself as a Ravitch-style tough-minded opportunity-promoter who wants to "leave no child behind," while Al Gore made sure to use the movement's key words—"higher standards" and "more accountability"—in his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention.

If Diane Ravitch is proposing a program blending toughness (everybody has to learn the academic curriculum) and generosity (everybody gets a real education courtesy of the government), Bush and Gore emphasize one side each of that bargain—the side you'd expect. Bush wants all elementary-school students tested every year in reading and math; Gore wants "voluntary national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math." Gore wants to spend heavily on new teachers and smaller classes; Bush doesn't. All that is in the fine print, though. The headlines are pretty much the same. Though neither candidate will say so directly, American public education is slowly being nationalized, through the mechanisms of standards and federal spending.

In the educational realm, "Left Back" will be unpopular. In the political realm, Ravitch has already won the argument. Whether that means that the history she sorrowfully recounts in "Left Back" is now going to be undone will be just about the most interesting question in politics over the next few years. ♦

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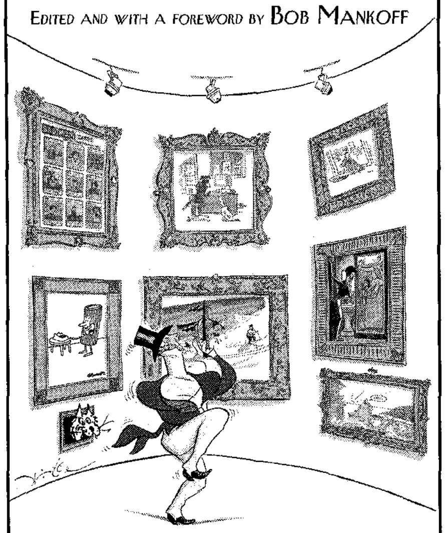

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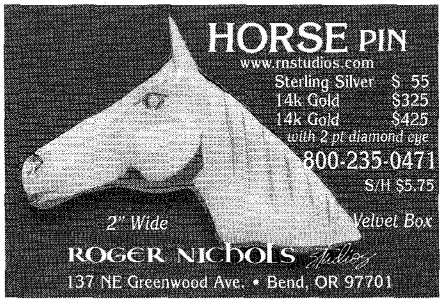
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BOOKS

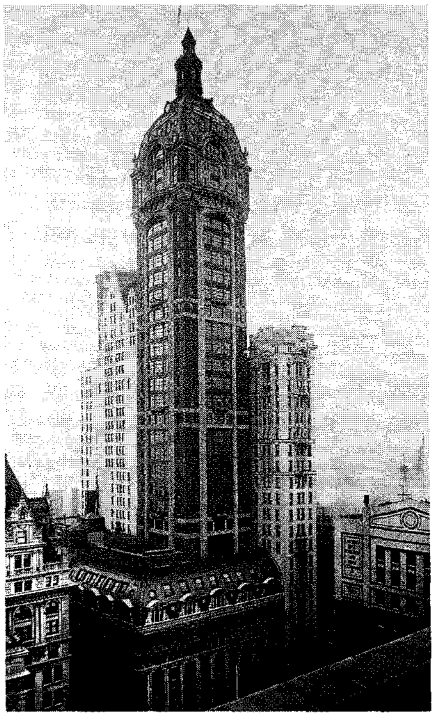
BUILDING HUGGERS

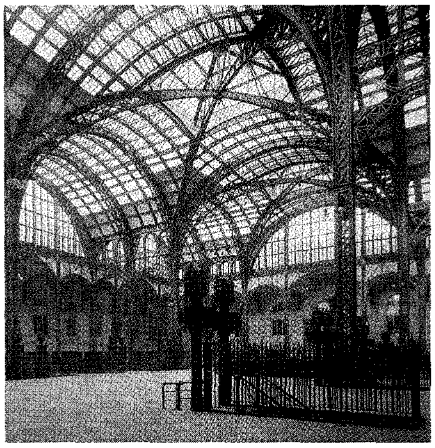
How much of New York should we save?

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

In 1966, Nathan Silver, a relatively obscure architect and teacher, wrote a book called "Lost New York." The cover showed the iron-and-glass train shed of Pennsylvania Station, a building that had been—shockingly—demolished three years earlier. "Lost New York" was written when anger over the destruction of Penn Station was still raw, and Silver, who was twenty-seven when he completed work on the book, was filled with righteous indignation. But his tone was gentle and wistful, and the book was a curious and rather lovely elegy to the sweet pleasures of brownstones and tenements and iron-and-glass subway kiosks as much as to the glories of famous landmarks.

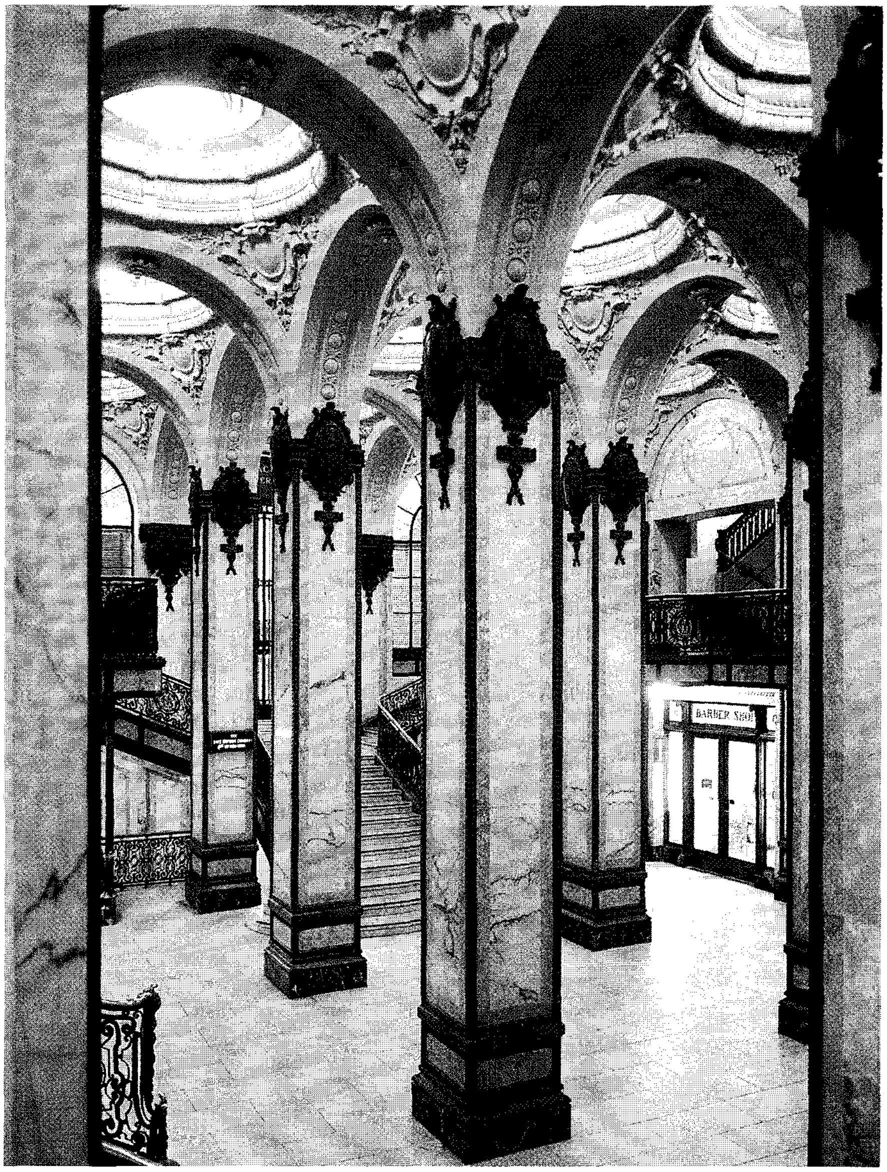
"Lost New York" appeared at the beginning of a popular wave of feeling about the past that was driven largely by the belief that modern architects, left to their own devices, would create unlivable cities. The Landmarks Preservation Law had been passed in New York a year earlier, creating the city's first official body charged with saving historic structures. One of the more powerful messages of "Lost New York," although Silver never expressed it explicitly, is that good architecture once stood a fair chance of being replaced by other good architecture—the way the Empire State Building replaced the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, for example, or the Century Apartments went up in place of the Century Opera House on Central Park West. Those were decent trade-offs, but they took place in the early nineteen-thirties, and by the sixties the odds of a good building being replaced by its equal were slim. No one wanted to admit it, but the preservation movement was fuelled as much by fear of the future as by love of the past.





TOP: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY GSAP; BOTTOM: AVERY LIBRARY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY; OPPOSITE: NATHAN SILVER

Silver's book was also a testament to the notion—common now, but a bit startling in 1966—that a civilized and coherent city is created not simply by great works of architecture but by the way the buildings fit together, and that the ensemble matters at least as much as individual structures. In this sense, Silver was a good follower of Jane Jacobs, whose "Death and Life of Great American Cities" had been published a few years earlier. Like Jacobs, Silver believed that cities need neighborhoods in which people can feel comfortable and secure, and that having them is an ennobling experience. "People value old things," he wrote, "not just for their rarity as antiques, but for their history of human use. . . . As a cultural manifestation, this may be a city's greatest function—its ability to present the full record of the past." By the nineteen-sixties, New York was losing, along with great pieces of architecture, the ordinary buildings that formed the texture of its neighborhoods.



The demolition in 1963 of Pennsylvania Station, with its majestic steel-ribbed interior (opposite, bottom), and three years later of the Singer Tower on lower Broadway, which had a marble, bronze, and glass lobby (above), rallied preservationists.

It is dangerous to meddle with a book that both perfectly expressed its moment and did much to shape it, and I'm not sure why Silver decided to revise "Lost New York." He has lived in England for the last thirty-five years, and in a reprint of the original edition of the book that appeared in 1976 he wrote that he refrained from revising then because "I prefer to leave the book as a record of the state of things at the time that I left New York." The new edition (Houghton Mifflin; $25) is pretty much the original book at heart, with the same graphics and photographs, but Silver has added a curious new final section he calls "Places and Moments," which includes photographs of Jackie Robinson stealing home at Ebbets Field, the 1968 student uprising at Columbia, and the crash of a plane into the side of the Empire State Building. The photographs are supposed to buttress the idea that "the intersection between a given place and a given time" lends value to the place, an idea which seems at odds with the original premise of the book—that is, that saving old buildings is not a purely nostalgic enterprise. When you pass the Omni Park Central Hotel (formerly the Park Sheraton), on Seventh Avenue, you can think all you like about Albert Anastasia, who was murdered in the barber shop there in 1957—as we are reminded by a photograph of his body being removed from the premises—but what has that got to do with saving the hotel?

Silver seems to be drifting toward a kind of Ford's Theatre theory of historic preservation, which confers value on a place because a historic event occurred there. That's fair enough in the case of the building where Lincoln was assassinated, but most structures housed much duller goings on. And very few buildings manage to meld their history literally with the present. Yankee Stadium does: there is something glorious about knowing that the physical form of the structure (never mind how badly it has been altered) ties Derek Jeter to Joe DiMaggio. The same thing happens in St. Patrick's Cathedral, and in Radio City Music Hall, and on the Brooklyn Bridge, and at the Empire State Building. But when I read the first version of Silver's book I was as moved by the pictures of brownstones and streetscapes as I was by the images of great buildings that had been lost. They reinforced what I took to be his central point: that a civilized backdrop for daily life is the most profound gift historic architecture can give us. Silver was angry about the rampant growth and wholesale demolition that would deny future generations the sense of continuity that he had felt growing up in New York.

Of course, if Silver had decided to make the new edition of his book a chronicle of the great landmarks that have disappeared since "Lost New York" was first published, there wouldn't have been much to include. The revolution in attitudes toward landmarks and historic preservation that Silver encouraged has been won. Pennsylvania Station was demolished, but Grand Central Terminal was saved. Indeed, after surviving the threat of near-destruction by a tower atop its main concourse, it has now been magnificently restored. The Landmarks Preservation Commission, which was in its shaky youth in 1966, is one of the most powerful agencies in the city. The real-estate industry accepts it as a fact of life, sort of like property taxes. There are more than a thousand individual landmarks in New York City, and seventy-six historic districts, which protect over twenty thousand buildings. It may seem that the city is changing faster than ever during the current boom, but vast chunks of it—including SoHo, the Upper East Side, Park Slope, and portions of Harlem—are likely to remain pretty much as they are, since the Landmarks Commission has the right not only to prevent demolitions but also to approve new construction in all the historic districts.

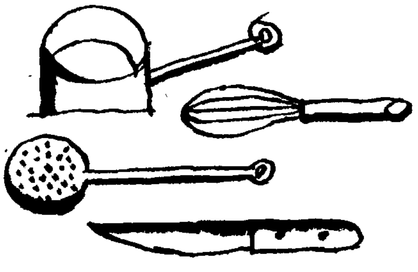
Silver's first version of "Lost New York" ended with a section called "Landmarks in Danger," which has been taken out of the new edition. It was one of the best parts of the original book, an emotional climax to a carefully constructed argument: here is the beautiful city you once had, and here are a few pieces of it that are tottering on the edge of destruction, and perhaps it is not too late to save them. Most of what Silver fretted over—the threatened destruction of SoHo by the Lower Manhattan Expressway, and the likely loss of Ellis Island, the J. P. Morgan mansion on Madison Avenue, the old Custom House at Bowling Green, Sailors' Snug Harbor on Staten Island, and the Seventh Regiment Armory on Park Avenue—has not occurred. True, the great Singer Tower on lower Broadway, the old Metropolitan Opera House on Thirty-ninth Street, and the Astor Hotel on Times Square did not make it, and there is no replacing them. But all three of these demolitions took place not long after "Lost New York" was first published, and no buildings as good as these have been torn down in New York for at least a decade.

You couldn't make a similar list of important buildings in danger today because there aren't any, or at least there aren't enough significant ones to fill a chapter. (The Times Building on West

BRIEFLY NOTED

Blood of the Liberals, *by George Packer (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $26).* This remarkable memoir stands at the intersection of personal and political history, observing the development of American liberalism through three generations of the author's family. Both Packer's maternal grandfather (a gentlemanly Southern congressman first elected in 1914) and his father (a Jewish law professor and administrator at Stanford during the turbulent nineteen-sixties) were considered liberals, although the term meant different things at different times. Both men also had personal troubles that colored their sense of social responsibility: his grandfather suffered through a marriage to an alcoholic wife, while his father battled depression, had a stroke, and eventually committed suicide. If the narrative has a flaw, it is that Packer's grandfather and father remain oddly detached from one another, like the cars of a decoupled train. Still, Packer's generous historical sweep, earnest intelligence, and profound commitment to the subject make this a difficult book to resist.

The Hunter, *by Julia Leigh (Four Walls Eight Windows; $20).* On a remote plateau, a man referred to as M tracks what may be the last living Tasmanian tiger. He is a professional, in the service of a biotechnology corporation that covets the tiger's genetic material. Between forays, M returns to his base camp, a decaying farmhouse that is tended by two young children, while their mother, whose husband has vanished in the wilderness, drugs herself to sleep. M forms a mute and unwilling attachment to the grieving family, even as he slips further into his role as predator. The topography of this first novel is familiar—the elusive beast M seeks is, on one level, himself—but the author makes no crude push for transcendence, and her narration is as clear-eyed and cold-blooded as her hero. On this high Australian plateau, the act of killing is an act of intimacy, and the viscera of gutted animals lie not so far from the "mandalas" of stars.



Rope Burns, *by F. X. Toole (Ecco; $23).* These riveting stories by the seventy-year-old Toole (a longtime cut man better known by his given name, Jerry Boyd) favor heavily sentimental plots more reminiscent of old Wallace Beery movies than of "Raging Bull." In one, a female boxer begs a crusty old trainer to take her under his wing, with tragic results; in another, an American middleweight on the cusp of middle age travels to Philadelphia for a bout against an African challenger. A less confident author might try to dress up such simple material with flashy prose. But Toole is a traditionalist, enamored of boozy romanticism and colorful vernacular, and when he throws a punch it usually finds its target.

Hats in the Ring: An Illustrated History of American Presidential Campaigns, *by Evan Cornog and Richard Whelan (Random House; $39.95).* Cornog has provided the words and Whelan has selected the pictures that compose a crisp, reliable, and entertaining account of the evolution of our elections over two centuries. For several generations, would-be Presidents pretended to follow Washington's example and allow the office to seek them, but such affectations of humility are belied by the pictorial evidence: cartoons, medals, and handbills, displaying fervent partisanship. After open competition for the Presidency became the norm, candidates used print, radio, and television to reach the public, although the demand for in-person appearances has persisted. Hoopla and flimflam seem inescapable, but frivolity is not the whole story. In uninterrupted succession, the elections have raised, confronted, or evaded issues that are central themes of American history, and each chapter is a snapshot of the nation in its time.

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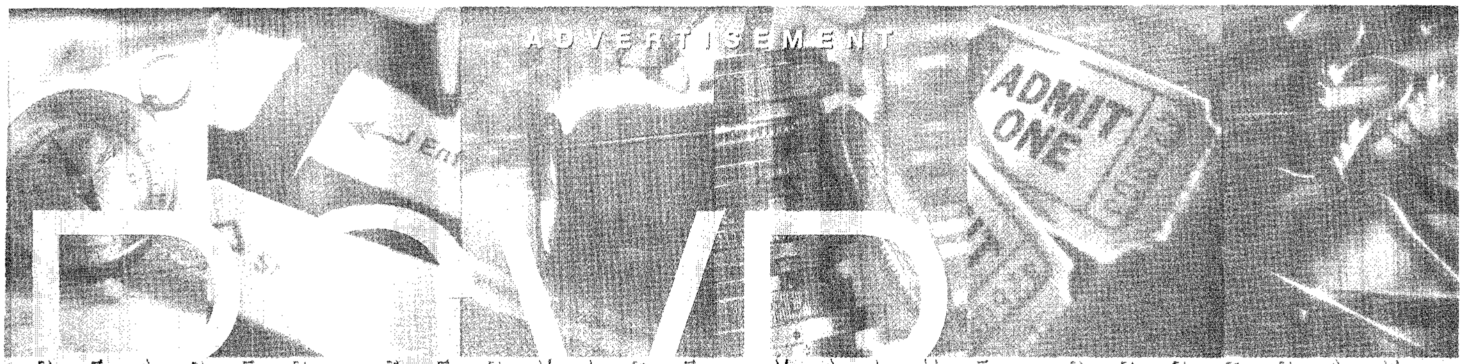

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Forty-third Street is threatened, and if it goes we will miss it, but it is not Pennsylvania Station.) In the new edition, "Landmarks in Danger" has been replaced with a more personal section that Silver calls "In Memoriam." It includes the Astor Hotel and the Met, as well as a few things he omitted the first time around, like the Roxy theatre. Silver is particularly good on the subject of the old opera house, whose demolition, he rightly points out, was encouraged by the Metropolitan Opera's management, which preferred to destroy the building rather than see it fall into the hands of a company that might become a competitor. Yet he doesn't acknowledge how unlikely it would be for the Met to get away with such a maneuver today, any more than the owners of the Astor Hotel or the Singer Tower, both of which were replaced by mediocre office buildings (at the time of its demolition, the Singer was the tallest building ever to be taken down), would have got their plans through the Landmarks Commission. Indeed, had both the old Met and the Astor hung on for a few more years, they would surely have become centerpieces of the Times Square revival. And it's easy to imagine developers desperate to convert the Singer Tower into high-rise, high-rent downtown living space.

The people who are angry these days aren't preservationists but architects, who complain that the historic-preservation movement has become so powerful that it has squeezed them out. I'm not sure that's entirely true. New York does, after all, have new buildings by Christian de Portzamparc, Rem Koolhaas, Diller & Scofidio, Bernard Tschumi, Greg Lynn, Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, and Raimund Abraham, among others, and it is more hospitable to cutting-edge design than it was a generation ago. But more buildings by Tod Williams and Billie Tsien, wonderful though they would be, aren't going to save New York. High-design architecture is a special event, as it always has been. The problem today isn't that we don't have enough of that kind of architecture; it's that the average building, the ordinary apartment house, is so undistinguished.

At the beginning of the last century, the builders of town houses, apartments, and storefronts seemed to aspire to the same things that the makers of more important buildings did. There was some connection between the architectural ideas in a Beaux-Arts museum and those in a bourgeois brownstone. Nathan Silver understood this when he wrote "Lost New York," and he helped a lot of other people understand it, too. I suspect that his argument played a role in encouraging the Landmarks Commission not only to designate individual landmarks but to overreach a bit when it made much of the Upper East Side a historic district. The commission realized that city planners weren't doing enough to guide and direct the flow of development, and that in order to keep Madison Avenue above Sixtieth Street from turning into Second Avenue the whole area had to be preserved, as most of Greenwich Village and Brooklyn Heights were. In retrospect, that was one of the most brilliant decisions about land use in the history of the city.

So important have the Landmarks Commission's historic-district designations become, at least in Manhattan, that you almost have to live in a historic district now to be free of the blight of mediocre towers. One could argue that the existence of a large number of historic districts, where there are severe constraints on the construction of big buildings, has increased the density of such buildings in other parts of the city. Still, the anti-preservationists who complain about avant-garde architecture's not having a chance in New York might ask why the new buildings in areas unprotected by landmarking are generally so awful. We are putting up more buildings in New York than ever before, and most of them are big, but few of them are better than what was built a hundred years ago. In that respect, the dilemma Nathan Silver drew attention to in the late sixties is still with us. ♦

From The Burr, a student magazine of Kent State University.

"We have to continue to be vigilant to stand up for people's right to express themselves," Young says. "Santana's refrain always gets to me: 'Those who fail to remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'"

¡Oye como va!

SKETCHBOOK BY DAVID HUGHES

UNLIKE A VIRGIN

Madonna is not only the ultimate survivor—put her on an island with Richard Hatch and start counting the hours until his bloated corpse washes up on the beach—but a cottage industry for trendy academics. They love to ponder the finer points of the Madonna phenomenon: her chameleonic image, her calculated provocations, the way in which her persona is both genuine (motherhood) and false (that ridiculous Pan-European accent she has affected since "Evita"). These musings have produced at least two volumes of essays and several accredited college courses.

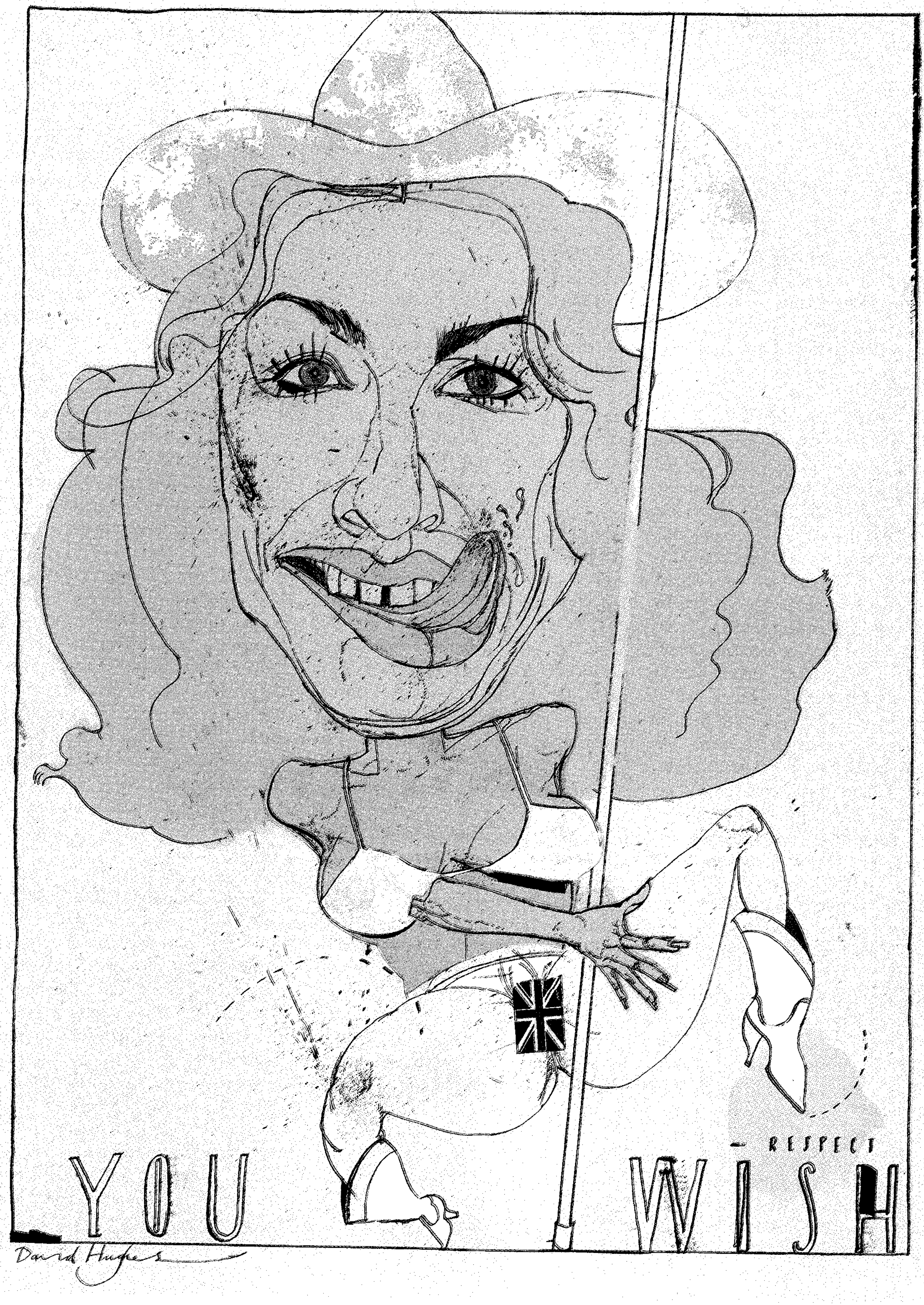
Another required text has just appeared on the syllabus. It's the video for her new single, "Music," which replaces the austere *mehndi* pretensions of her last album, "Ray of Light," with a campy update of seventies pimp chic—spangled cowboy hat, white fur coat, jewelry in every imaginable location, and slinky ladies packed hair to heel in a gold stretch limousine. The British comedian Ali G, as the clownish driver, stands in for every man (and woman) who has ever gazed upon the icon with longing. "Is you Madonna?" he asks. "Your babylons look less big than they do on the telly, but I still definitely would."

"You wish," she says.

"I do, actually," he mutters.

Madonna's desirability once again established, "Music" becomes music: a sharp dance beat, a burbling bass, and an insistent synthesizer line that follows the limo through a night on the town. "Music" is the most jubilant song on her upcoming album of the same name—elsewhere, the record is spare, or dozy, or eerie. In one song, "I Deserve It," Madonna's voice is limpid and almost folky, without any electronic trickery. Even though you can't see her, she is more naked than she's been in years.

—*Ben Greenman*


YOU
— RESPECT
WISH
David Hughes

THE ART WORLD

LIGHT IN JUDDLAND

Flavin arrives in the Xanadu of Minimalism.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

To get to Donald Judd's Chinati Foundation, you fly to El Paso and drive nearly two hundred cruise-control miles through sullen desert and unambitious mountain ranges to the agreeably beat-up former cattle town of Marfa. The last big event in Marfa (population about twenty-five hundred) was the filming of "Giant," in 1955, but there's a strenuously promoted tourist attraction, the Marfa Mystery Lights—unexplained nighttime gleams that dance above the horizon. Chinati aside, the most robust local institution is a headquarters of the Border Patrol. A pretty good Mexican restaurant called Carmen's heads the very short list of local amenities.

Judd, the doyen of Minimalism, who died in 1994, at the age of sixty-five, first visited the town in 1971. "I think Judd sensed that he needed to get to Marfa," the architect Michael Benedikt told a symposium at Chinati in 1998. "He knew that for his Minimalist pieces to work they really had to be in a maximalist environment. He needed natural and changing light, greenery, old concrete, old buildings, and materials that had palimpsestic value." Much of an adjacent, defunct Army base, Fort D. A. Russell, was bought for Judd by the Dia Art Foundation before the artist—ever litigious—fell out with that avant-gardish patron. He snapped up additional disused facilities around Marfa dirt cheap, including airplane hangars, a bank, and a supermarket which he fashioned into an austere utopia of concrete, metal, glass, Sheetrock, brick, and adobe. These facilities, along with Judd's studio, library, and living quarters, are now part of the Judd estate, which is administered by his two children. The place should be world famous, somehow. But Chinati, like its founder, bristles with defenses against vulgar renown. Such is its cussedness and esoteric glamour.

Despite Chinati's reputation as the Xanadu of Minimalism, I had somehow avoided visiting it until late this summer, on the occasion of the installation of a marvellous work—"Untitled (Marfa project)"—by Judd's closest artistic peer, the late Dan Flavin. The piece deploys three hundred and sixty colored fluorescent lights in six former barracks. Its effect, like that of Chinati over all, is both punctilious and intoxicating.

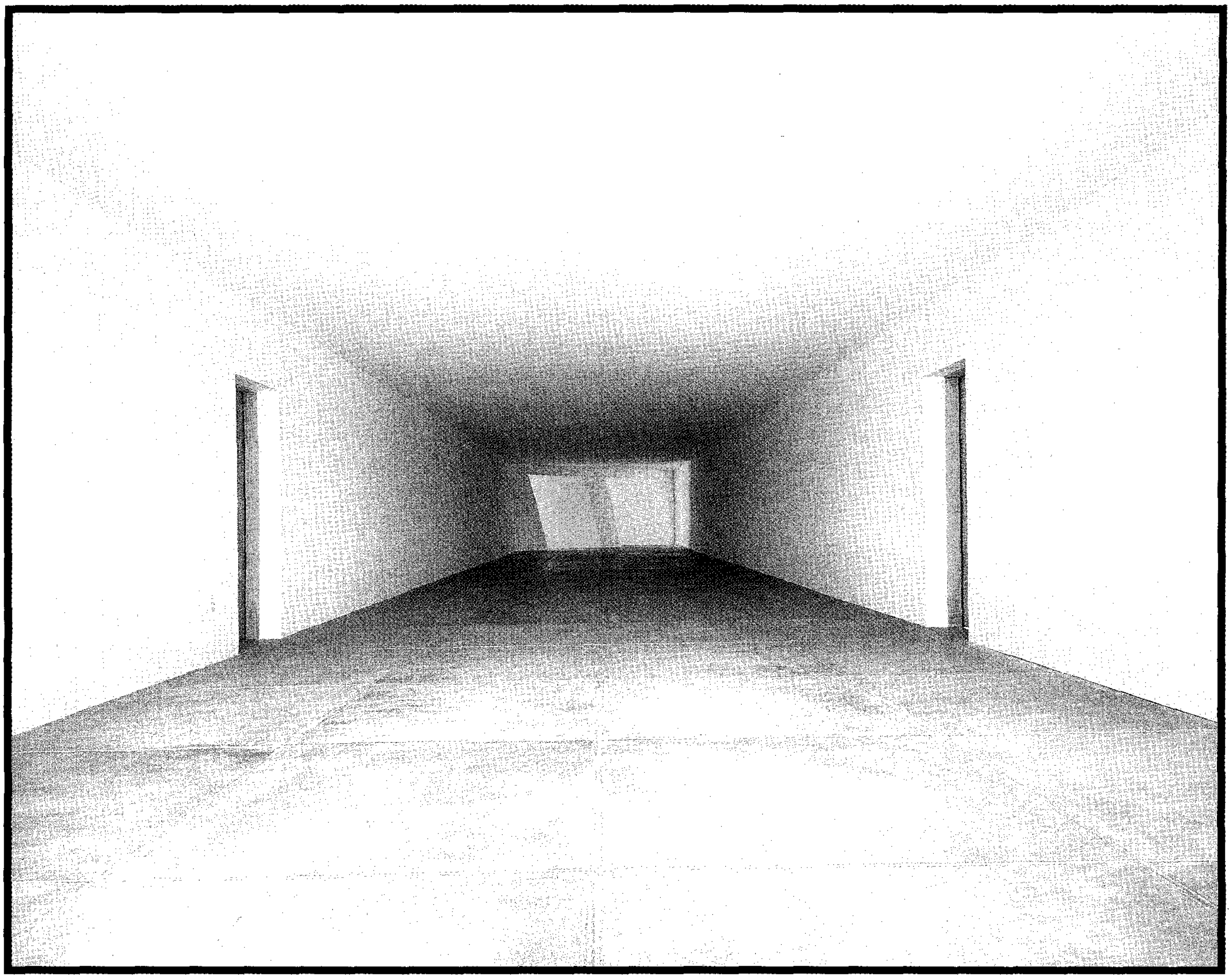
Chinati anticipates visitors who are more pilgrims than tourists. Some twenty remodelled buildings house sculpture, pictorial art, furniture, and architectural designs by Judd and chosen contemporaries. Modest collections of works representing German Constructivism, Dutch de Stijl, and the Bauhaus invoke ancestral gods. The Arena, a former gymnasium, is a colossal meeting hall, whose floor of exposed gravel and concrete beams generates a strange, raw grandeur. Under the Foundation's director, Marianne Stockebrand, a German curator and the companion of Judd's last years, Chinati keeps growing, in accord with the artist's plans. It is hard to think of a precedent for it all. The best that I can imagine is a cross between Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West and Constantin Brancusi's sculpture park at Tirgu Jiu, in Romania. At night, a specially invited artist or writer (not me: I stayed in the Riata Inn motel) may dream on an islanded mattress in one or another building that permits no distinction between art space and space for living. Navajo blankets, pottery, and turquoise jewelry, in Judd's own as-he-left-it bedroom, mark the place's closest brush with gemütlichkeit. The artist-designer's rectilinear, anti-comfortable furniture is ubiquitous. Anything vague or soft in your personality cringes.

Naturally, Judd's high-plains empire stars his own stuff—notably in a kilometre-long procession of concrete modules that loom above the sagebrush, and two huge former artillery sheds that house a hundred-unit suite of his signature aluminum boxes. But Chinati attends to context, too. Back in the sixties, Judd's claim to preëminence for his program of "specific objects" (taciturn forms in sleek materials, splitting an ineffable difference between painting and sculpture) was contested by the conceptual Minimalism of Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt, and Robert Smithson; by "formalist" work like the painted-metal sculpture of Anthony Caro; and by Pop art. Judd's cast of featured contemporaries—notably Carl Andre, John Chamberlain, and John Wesley—amounts to a palace guard. A tour de force by Andre—a building devoted to typewritten, framed poems—marks the limit of Judd's tolerance of conceptualism. Chamberlain's colorful sculptures of crumpled auto bodies flip off Caro. Wesley, a wry painter of enigmatic cartoons, polices the Pop frontier. The result—augmented with single works by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Ilya Kabakov, Richard Long, Roni Horn, and others—is a tight, tendentious canon.

Dan Flavin, the light sculptor, was something of a Braque to Judd's Picasso, though he was less obviously subordinate in achievement. (Flavin died, in 1996, of diabetes, at sixty-three.) Flavin's work has brought home to more than one art lover the world-changing import of Minimalism, which reversed the old order of subject and object in artistic experience. Instead of focussing on a thing, a viewer becomes the self-conscious focus of a situation—and what's more situational than light? The experience of being literally illuminated by Flavin's cannily arrayed, perfectly scaled fluorescent fixtures can have emotional consequences that seem preposterously out of proportion to their matter-of-fact cause. His work tends to devastate any traditional art in its vicinity. The critic Rosalind Krauss once described the effect that some Flavins had on other work in a historical exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne, in Paris: "The earlier paintings and sculpture look impossibly tiny and inconsequential, like postcards, and the galleries take on a fussy, crowded, culturally irrelevant look, like so many curio shops." I am here to say that the dire epiphany needn't be terminal. After experiencing Flavins, one may live to savor "earlier paintings and sculpture," though only with difficulty in the same place and hour. To do so, one must shrug off the powerful vision of a world that is comprehensively, vertiginously, and rather brutally aestheticized along rational lines.

"Untitled (Marfa project)" is a triumphant handshake of Judd and Flavin at the summit of that world. Pink, green, blue, and yellow fluorescent tubes are arrayed in eight-foot-high, tilted, two-sided racks of twenty, with ten of one color to a side. The color on the back of each rack shows through between the tubes on the front. The units occupy specially built corridors at the end of six U-shaped barracks, in such a way that you either face blazing tubes or observe oblique washes of light. Behind you, as you face the Flavins, are windows that look out onto west Texas. Daylight segues smoothly into fluorescence, and vice versa. Color combinations vary logically, from pink and green in the first two buildings, through blue and yellow in the third and fourth, to an assortment of the whole spectrum in the last two buildings. The differences feel very important. The general effect is enforced meditation. No matter how busy your mind may be, its circuits are overridden by the work's steady effulgences. The time you spend in each room is as organized as light waves are in a laser beam. The piece would be overbearing if you tried to resist it, but resistance is out of the question. You have never encountered anything that is at once more laconic and more beautiful.

Chinati is a climax of the twentieth century's fixations on rational process and aesthetic purification. As such, it has an air of being entirely too good for mere human beings. No wonder that Judd, unlike his foremost contemporary, the all-forgiving Andy Warhol, has no iconic presence in the larger culture: he is ingratiation-free. So is Flavin, once you leave the luminous aura of his work. But consider this impressive fact: Chinati isn't getting dated; its look hasn't congealed into a style. "Somewhere . . . a strict measure must exist for the art of this time and place," Judd wrote with stunning arrogance. When considered amidst the sunstruck and shadowed buildings of Chinati, the remark verges on plain sense.



A segment of Flavin's magically rational "Untitled (Marfa project)" in an old Army barracks. Photograph by Todd Eberle.

The desert looked different to me as Marfa receded in my rearview mirror. Its emptiness seemed a vast frame—or, perhaps, a buffer zone—for what I'd experienced at Chinati, as if God were Judd's landscaper. When the first billboarded, trashy, commercial tentacle of El Paso rose into view, I felt abruptly awakened from a dream of order. I also found myself breathing more easily. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

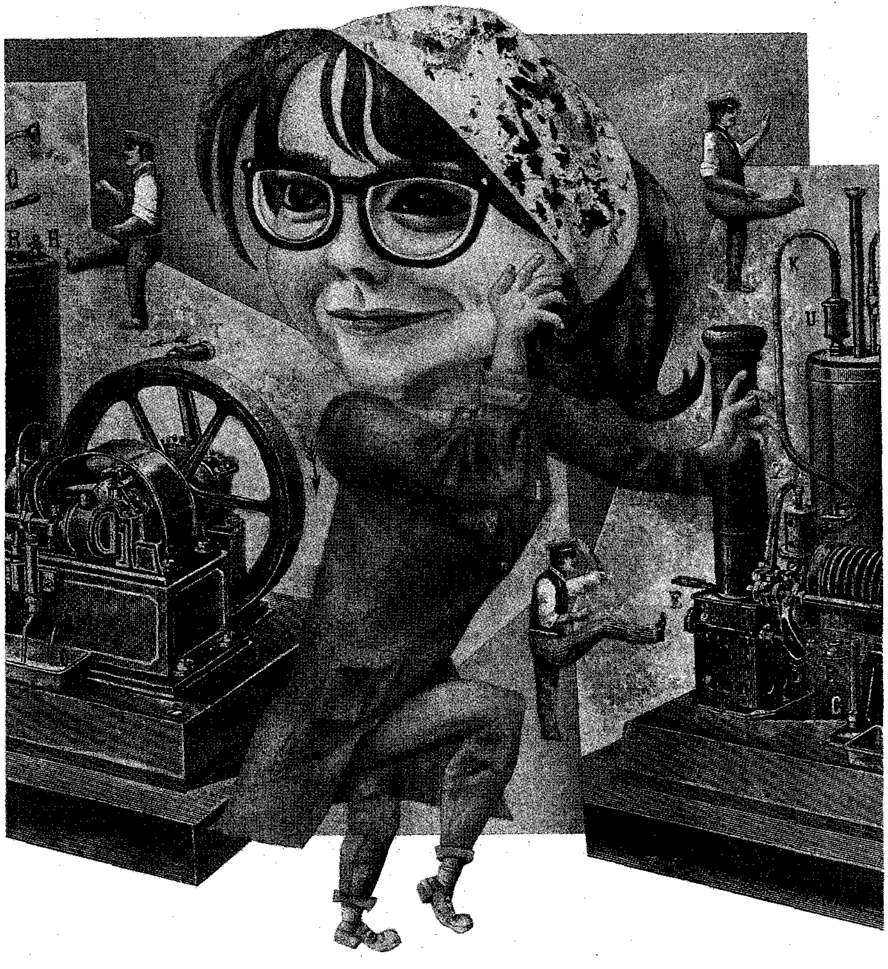
SINGIN' THROUGH THE PAIN

Lars Von Trier's "Dancer in the Dark" and Laurent Cantet's "Human Resources."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Offhand, I cannot think of many directors who would ask a leading lady to break into song as she is about to be hanged. Mel Brooks, at the apogee of his tastelessness, might have done it, as a nod to gallows humor; now we have Lars Von Trier, best known for "Breaking the Waves," who chooses, in all solemnity, to entertain us with musical enchantment right up to the snapping of his heroine's neck. The work in question is "Dancer in the Dark," a godsend to those of us who pray for divisive works of art, and who would support any federal measure that introduced legalized scuffling in cinemas; when the movie was shown at the Cannes Film Festival this year, the claque of viewers who sought madly for eggs and tomatoes to pitch at the screen was matched by the number who rose and cheered.

The cast is achingly hip: Catherine Deneuve; Jean-Marc Barr (star of "The Big Blue" and of Von Trier's hypnotizing "Europa") as a factory foreman; Peter Stormare (a hit man in "Fargo") as a nice guy; and, in her first acting role, Björk, the funny little Icelandic techno-sprite who has become a goddess to millions of rock fans you've never met. She wrote the songs for the new film, and she also stars as Selma, a Czech who lives in America with her young son, Gene (Vladica Kostic). Selma's eyesight is fast failing ("It's a family thing," she says). Her best friend at work, Kathy (Deneuve), guesses as much and helps out whenever she can; then, there are Selma's kindly neighbors, a cop named Bill (David Morse) and his free-spending wife, Linda (Cara Seymour). Bill has money worries, and, when he sees how much Selma keeps stashed behind the ironing board, he cannot fend off temptation. Discovery leads to agonizing, agony to bloodshed; Selma goes from courtroom to cell, and finally paces out the hundred and seven steps to her appointed place of death.



Björk as a Czech daydreaming her way into song and dance in an American factory.

BLAIR DRAWSON

She is a fall girl, and her story, with its gathering blindness and its fog of injustice, peers back not just to Warner Bros. weepies but to the classic predicaments of silent cinema and early cartoons; Björk's smiling heart-face is part of an elfish tradition that began with the Gish sisters, Mary Pickford, and Betty Boop. There is something of the mad professor in Von Trier's wild distillings of movie history; versed in innumerable genres, he nevertheless feels no compunction about shaking them into lurid compounds. Every week, Selma rehearses for an amateur production of "The Sound of Music," and, as the film darkens, she keeps daydreaming her way into song and dance; anything can get her going—the slam and gasp of machinery, the tap of wire against a flagpole, scratchy pencils, or a needle hissing in a groove. Fred Astaire had the same, hypersensitive effect on his surroundings; a ship's pistons set him off without warning in "Shall We Dance?" But Astaire's world was sleek, if not exactly rosy, to start with; Selma is a single mother stuck in a trailer, and the film stock that glows and quickens for her musical reveries can revert, with a single cut, to the weary gray-and-beige schemes of her natural life. For the scene in which the whole factory twists and shouts, Von Trier ran a hundred fixed cameras simultaneously; back in the trailer, he switches to the anxious, handheld fidgeting of "The Idiots," his previous exercise in shock.

Can you handle this? If you happen to remember Godard's homages to the Hollywood musical—"A Woman Is a Woman," say, or Anna Karina skipping and chanting by the sea in "Pierrot le Fou"—you may not feel so alarmed, although Von Trier is a showoff to a degree that the more gnomic Godard would never have countenanced. Yet there is melancholy, if not method, in the madness of this film; it was shot in Sweden (with his fear of flying, Von Trier has never visited America, and has no plans to do so), and, with its polyglot cast and nameless setting, it feels like an immigrant's haunted myth of the United States—at once more cruel, and more generous with its raptures, than the real thing. It is a country where you can still see Busby Berkeley pictures at your local theatre, where happy, leaping hoboes ride the railroad, and where hanging, not lethal injection, is the state's preferred means of execution. Selma's faith in the New World is both her prop and her tragedy; she thinks that Bill and Linda's house looks like a movie, and that "in a musical, nothing dreadful ever happens." But "Dancer in the Dark" is riven with dread, and there are moments when you don't know where to look—not merely in exasperation or embarrassment but because the pain of Selma's pitiable case is too exposed, too far from being soothed. As she reaches down to remove the spectacles from the eyes of her sleeping son—whose sight, unless corrected, will also decline—the grain of the image becomes a kind of gloaming, and the curt, unsentimental inventory of the condemned woman's cell (blanket, shelf, toothbrush) is a way of saying, "Do not kill her. These are signs of life." To maintain her sanity, in the blank silence of prison, Selma sings a fragment of "My Favorite Things." And then she won't feel so bad.

We are on the brink of frivolity here, though not, oddly enough, of the mawkish. If Björk were more artful in her registration of pain, the film would turn horribly cute; as it is, her flightiness—those fanciful swoops away from suffering and back again—seems inborn, and there is something unfeigned in her final bout of panic, when the black hood is yanked over Selma's head to block her useless gaze. As if quieted by such directness, Von Trier drops the trickery and simply tightens the screws; to watch Catherine Deneuve, the ice queen of modern cinema, thaw and howl with distress at her friend's undignified doom is a sight guaranteed to unnerve. The two friends in front of me came out steaming with derision; the woman behind me trailed away in tears, as if Björk's keening croon of a voice were still wailing around her head. Go and see this movie, even if you quit before the end; after all, Selma herself used to leave her favorite pictures "just after the next-to-last song." That way, she explains, "the film would go on forever."

Typical. You wait all year for one film set in a steel-pressing plant, and then two come along. In the unlikely event that "Dancer in the Dark" failed to sate your appetite for light industry, you could try the more placid, though perhaps more probing, experience of "Human Resources." Given that Laurent Cantet's movie considers the effects of the newly imposed thirty-five-hour week on the French economy, with particular reference to annualization, my only question is: How will theatre owners contain the crowds? Has anyone in the N.Y.P.D. devoted any thought to holding back the crazed mob of three, rising to four on weekends, who will stop at nothing to storm their way into repeated screenings?

The story unfurls in a bright, modern factory in northern France, where Franck (Jalil Lespert) is hired as a trainee in the personnel department, to muster some practical experience before he returns to Paris and finishes his degree. Franck is smart—smarter than his contemporaries, most of whom have stayed put, and certainly smarter than his father, Jean-Claude (Jean-Claude Vallod), who has worked at the plant for thirty years. Soon enough, the boss (Lucien Longueville) begins to notice Franck, and to heed his plan for a referendum that will bypass the union leaders—notably Madame Arnoux (Danielle Mélador), a magnificent specimen of squat bloody-mindedness—and appeal directly to the workers. It all goes according to plan, then suddenly swerves into treachery; nobody seems especially surprised by this except Franck, whose idealism and intellect are thus revealed, as they usually are in movies, to be little more than hopeless innocence. He sets off in a suit and ends up on the picket line, daubing banners with paint.

However you describe it, the whole thing sounds dour and ungainly, like the beaten light and landscape of its setting; Lespert, too, has a long-jawed moodiness, and you sense something easily bruised, raw to the touch, in his hunched and inward demeanor. Why is it, then, that the movie has grab as well as grit? It may be because Lespert was the only professional actor in sight; the others were nonprofessionals—unemployed steelworkers, for the most part, whom Cantet trained for months. (Even the boss is the genuine article; where else can you get that fleshy, faux-chummy look, that flattering arm around the shoulders of the dupe?) The movie was shot in a functioning factory, and there are stately tracking shots that follow Franck along a row of presses; authenticity alone, however, never guaranteed anything, and what jostles "Human Resources" past mere dedication is an eagerness to peel back the political and poke about. This is less a study of economics than a fable of fathers and sons, though it is horribly familiar with the list of eternal pressures, starting with money and education, that can tug the generations apart; when Franck declares himself "ashamed of being ashamed" of Jean-Claude, who is toiling dumbly through a strike, I thought of Pip, in "Great Expectations," mortified first by the oafishness of his beloved Joe and then, doubly so, by his own hauteur. I wasn't wholly convinced that Franck would shout that line out loud, in front of his comrades, but Cantet does a great job of preparing the ground, and the father, with his lowered gaze and trembling lip—not unhappy in his trade, consoled by the rhythm of what others scorn as monotony—is a precise, if pathetic, tribute to the human hatred of fuss. In many ways, this is a conservative movie about the implacable need to rebel, and all the better for it; at lunch, the operators of dangerous machinery even have a bottle of red wine parked proudly in the middle of the table. If they can still work a thirty-five-hour week, good luck to them. ♦

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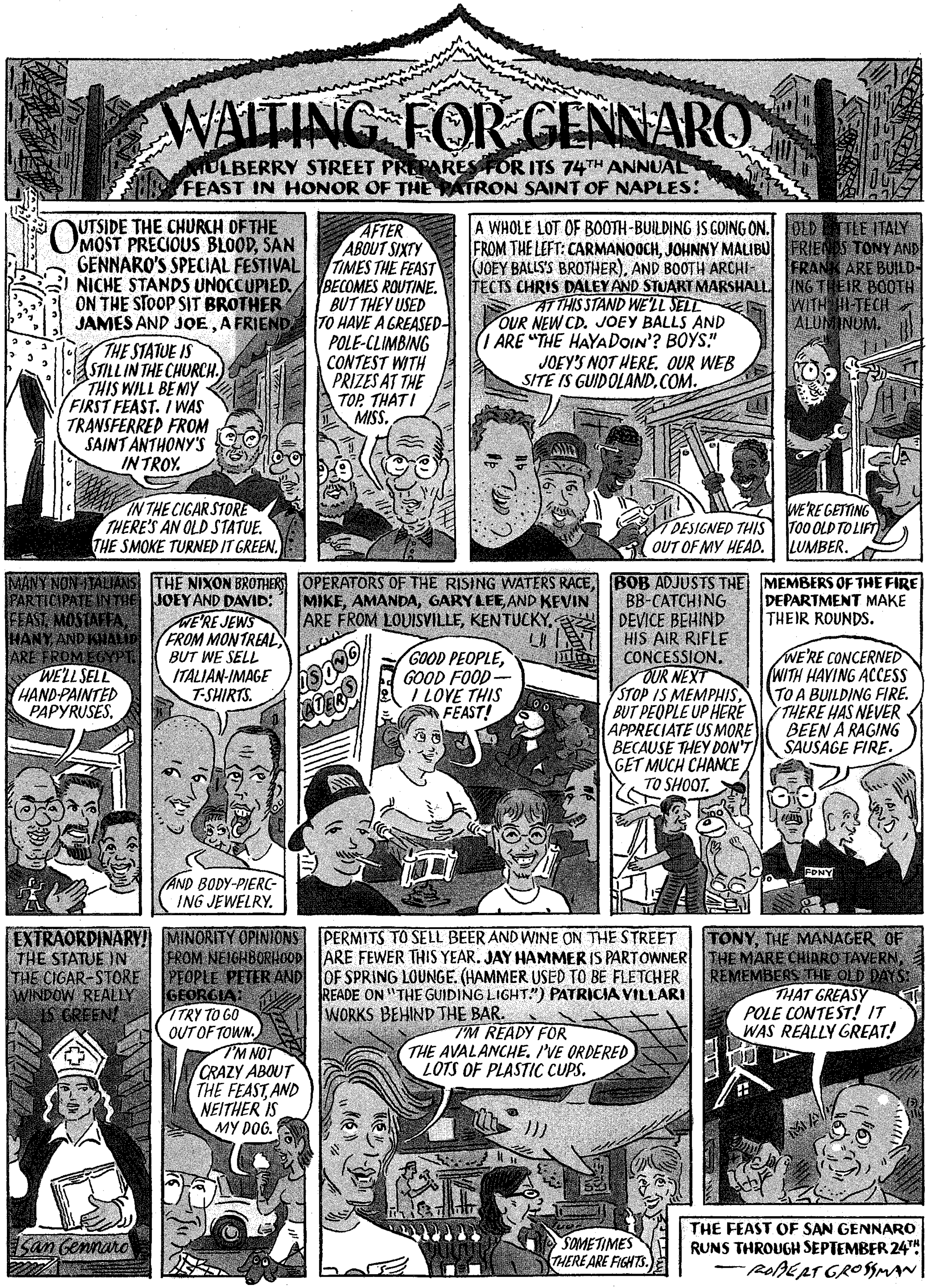
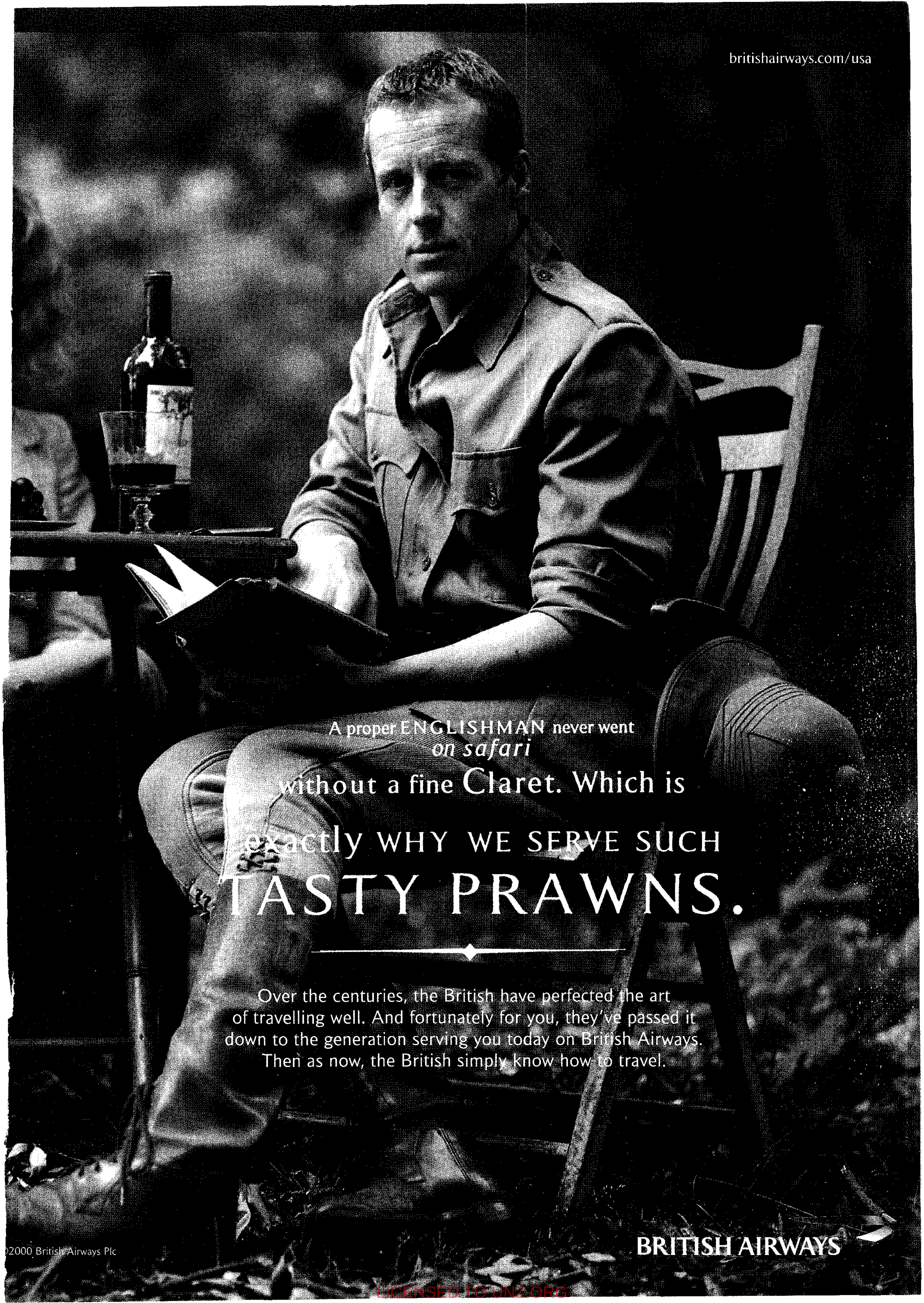

WAITING FOR GENNARO
MULBERRY STREET PREPARES FOR ITS 74TH ANNUAL FEAST IN HONOR OF THE PATRON SAINT OF NAPLES:
OUTSIDE THE CHURCH OF THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD, SAN GENNARO'S SPECIAL FESTIVAL NICHE STANDS UNOCCUPIED. ON THE STOOP SIT BROTHER JAMES AND JOE, A FRIEND.
THE STATUE IS STILL IN THE CHURCH. THIS WILL BE MY FIRST FEAST. I WAS TRANSFERRED FROM SAINT ANTHONY'S IN TROY.
IN THE CIGAR STORE THERE'S AN OLD STATUE. THE SMOKE TURNED IT GREEN.
AFTER ABOUT SIXTY TIMES THE FEAST BECOMES ROUTINE. BUT THEY USED TO HAVE A GREASED-POLE-CLIMBING CONTEST WITH PRIZES AT THE TOP. THAT I MISS.
A WHOLE LOT OF BOOTH-BUILDING IS GOING ON. FROM THE LEFT: CARMANOOCH, JOHNNY MALIBU (JOEY BALLS'S BROTHER), AND BOOTH ARCHITECTS CHRIS DALEY AND STUART MARSHALL.
AT THIS STAND WE'LL SELL OUR NEW CD. JOEY BALLS AND I ARE "THE HAYADOIN'? BOYS." JOEY'S NOT HERE. OUR WEB SITE IS GUIDOLAND.COM.
I DESIGNED THIS OUT OF MY HEAD.
OLD LITTLE ITALY FRIENDS TONY AND FRANK ARE BUILDING THEIR BOOTH WITH HI-TECH ALUMINUM.
WE'RE GETTING TOO OLD TO LIFT LUMBER.
MANY NON-ITALIANS PARTICIPATE IN THE FEAST. MOSTAFFA, HANY, AND KHALID ARE FROM EGYPT.
WE'LL SELL HAND-PAINTED PAPYRUSES.
THE NIXON BROTHERS, JOEY AND DAVID:
WE'RE JEWS FROM MONTREAL, BUT WE SELL ITALIAN-IMAGE T-SHIRTS.
AND BODY-PIERCING JEWELRY.
OPERATORS OF THE RISING WATERS RACE, MIKE, AMANDA, GARY LEE, AND KEVIN ARE FROM LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.
RISING WATERS
GOOD PEOPLE, GOOD FOOD — I LOVE THIS FEAST!
BOB ADJUSTS THE BB-CATCHING DEVICE BEHIND HIS AIR RIFLE CONCESSION.
OUR NEXT STOP IS MEMPHIS, BUT PEOPLE UP HERE APPRECIATE US MORE BECAUSE THEY DON'T GET MUCH CHANCE TO SHOOT.
MEMBERS OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT MAKE THEIR ROUNDS.
WE'RE CONCERNED WITH HAVING ACCESS TO A BUILDING FIRE. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A RAGING SAUSAGE FIRE.
FDNY
EXTRAORDINARY! THE STATUE IN THE CIGAR-STORE WINDOW REALLY IS GREEN!
San Gennaro
MINORITY OPINIONS FROM NEIGHBORHOOD PEOPLE PETER AND GEORGIA:
I TRY TO GO OUT OF TOWN.
I'M NOT CRAZY ABOUT THE FEAST, AND NEITHER IS MY DOG.
PERMITS TO SELL BEER AND WINE ON THE STREET ARE FEWER THIS YEAR. JAY HAMMER IS PART OWNER OF SPRING LOUNGE. (HAMMER USED TO BE FLETCHER READE ON "THE GUIDING LIGHT.") PATRICIA VILLARI WORKS BEHIND THE BAR.
I'M READY FOR THE AVALANCHE. I'VE ORDERED LOTS OF PLASTIC CUPS.
SOMETIMES THERE ARE FIGHTS.
TONY, THE MANAGER OF THE MARE CHIARO TAVERN, REMEMBERS THE OLD DAYS:
THAT GREASY POLE CONTEST! IT WAS REALLY GREAT!
THE FEAST OF SAN GENNARO RUNS THROUGH SEPTEMBER 24TH!
— ROBERT GROSSMAN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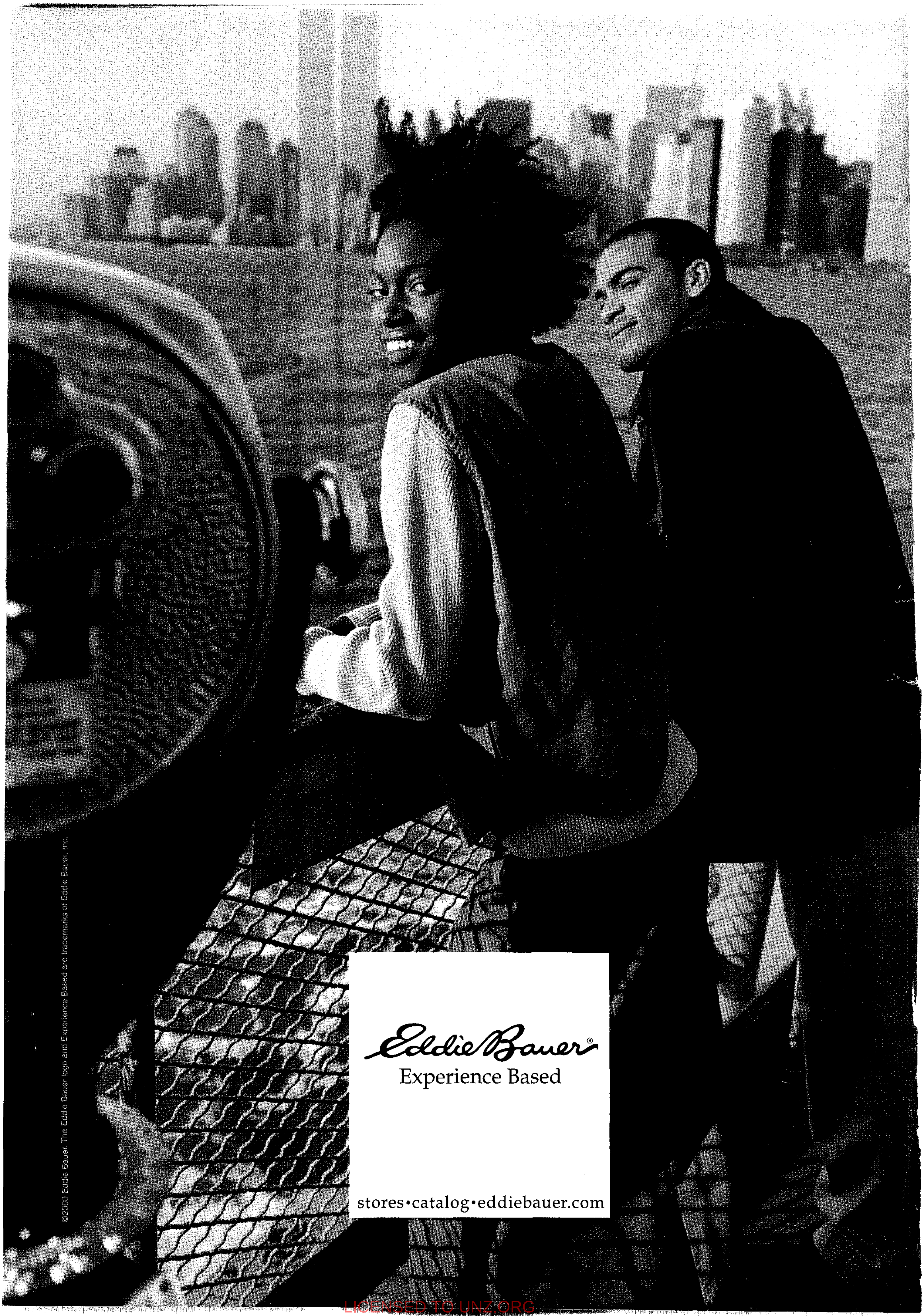
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